

ANNUAL REPORT

Academic Year 2024/2025



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DIRECTORS', FOREWORD

THE NEW INSTITUTE dedicated this year's collaborative fellowship program to the theme of Re-thinking Capitalism. Capitalism structures the global system, which makes it striking how few institutions are devoted to interrogating its foundations, limits, and alternatives. Consistent with our belief that the humanities are essential to addressing today's interwoven crises, we understand capitalism not merely as an economic form, but as a socio-political practice—one that shapes values, behaviors, and culture. Our starting point is the ambivalent nature of capitalism: it has simultaneously generated immense material wealth, brought millions out of poverty, spurred technological and scientific development and also deepened inequality, promoted mass-scale ecological destruction, and fragmented societies. Does this mean that capitalism as such needs to be left behind or can capitalism be consistent with social well-being, equality, and work within planetary boundaries?

Our six programs interrogated different dimensions of this system, seeking to illuminate how it can be progressively transformed to serve both people and the planet. Consistent with our overarching mission to overcome the theory-practice gap, we brought together practitioners and academics from different sectors and disciplines. Our international focus is also reflected in our program chairs, who come from four continents and bring perspectives from Japan, Nigeria, Peru, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This year, our programs were:

- **Futures of Capitalism**
(chaired by Prof. Dr. Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou)
- **Africapitalism**
(chaired by Prof. Dr. Kenneth Amaeshi)
- **Beyond Capitalism**
(chaired by Prof. Dr. Kohei Saito)
- **The Future of Food**
(chaired by José Luis Chicoma)
- **Planetary Governance**
(chaired by Maja Groff)
- **Bitter Victory**
(chaired by Prof. Dr. Petar Bojanic)

The first four programs brought together foundational questions about how capitalism as such works with concrete problems like repurposing financial instruments towards social ends, reforming food supply chains, and supporting shared entrepreneurship. Productive debates emerged across programs about the extent to which we require systems change as well as which practices count as progressive. There were also some recurring controversies:

Can a degrowth economy be governed by the state or is it better to focus on bottom-up approaches for the fair distribution of profits? Why are authoritarian narratives so convincing, and what is missing from liberal narratives to make them more appealing?

In response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine and in the Middle East, we organized a short-term program (Bitter Victory) concerned with these issues. This program analyzed the evolution of victory doctrines and explored their implications for the termination of violence and establishment of peace.

Fellow selection was based on open calls for applications in collaboration with the respective chairs. In addition, 11 individual fellows were invited to contribute to cross-group discussions with their projects. A total of 55 fellows (69% academics and 31% practitioners from 20 countries) lived and worked at the Institute in 2024/25.

In a year marked by horrific wars, the global rise of right-wing authoritarian movements, and numerous attacks on free elections, a heated debate erupted among the fellows about the (in)evitability of social, economic and ecological collapse. If collapse is on the horizon, then the approach to bringing about positive social transformation radically changes. Assessments depended not

only on individual temperament, but also on regional background. Fellows from comparatively politically stable and relatively wealthy countries were particularly receptive to the collapse theory. As a result, some programs shifted their focus from war economy to dark socialism and from finance imaginaries to collapse finance. But there were also forward-looking successes. For example, the Nigerian government officially adopted the One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI) of the "Africapitalism" program as a national strategy to fight poverty. The "Future of Food" program drafted a report that synthesizes various analyses and describes ways to achieve a more just and sustainable global food system. The "Planetary Governance" program laid the foundations for the establishment of an International Court of the Environment and a Global Environment Agency. Even if global developments are not currently moving towards international cooperation, we nevertheless have to prepare for futures where such institutions are necessary to guard against massive human suffering.

The convivial atmosphere created by living, eating, and working closely together fostered mutual understanding and trust, which led to new ideas and collaborations impossible to achieve under less intimate conditions. We observed how lively interaction developed between groups, how expertise was shared, and networks across countries and disciplines were built. Furthermore, numerous references to last year's theme, Commons and Commoning, developed.

In addition to various in-house activities, we organized a series of public events and partner events with the Körber Foundation, the Frankfurt Book Fair, the Thalia Theatre and, together with the weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT and the Bundeskanzler-Helmut-Schmidt-Stiftung, the awarding of the Helmut-Schmidt-Zukunftspreis.

This academic year marks the end of THE NEW INSTITUTE's residential fellowship program. A total of 155 fellows from 27 countries have lived and worked at the Institute. This has resulted in a large number of publications, public interventions, and the establishment of a broad network of global thinkers and practitioners. And it has sown the seeds for a more just and democratic future that will continue to flourish in other places.

Reflections on our experiences forming an international resident fellowship program that focuses on trans-sectoral work and concrete outputs for positive change will be available on our website.

We would like to warmly thank everyone who contributed to and supported the visionary idea of THE NEW INSTITUTE—the fellows, guests, and dedicated staff members who are committed to a better future with their hearts and minds.

We would like to also express our heartfelt gratitude to Erck Rickmers for making this possible through his generous support.



Dr. Anna Katsman,
Academic Director



Dr. Britta Padberg
Managing Director



ERCK RICKMERS

Founder of THE NEW INSTITUTE and Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Erck Rickmers is the founder of THE NEW INSTITUTE. From 2010 to 2012, the entrepreneur and investor served in the parliament of the state of Hamburg. In 2014, driven by concern about the future of the planet, he developed the idea of giving the humanities a bigger role in shaping societal change. For this reason, he acquired the Warburg Ensemble, a group of 19th-century townhouses, which opened in 2022 as THE NEW INSTITUTE, where up to 35 fellows lived and worked collaboratively each academic year.



SABINE KUNST

Chairwoman of the Board of the Joachim Herz Foundation

Sabine Kunst is a German engineering scientist, professor, and politician. She holds doctorates in both water management and political science. From 1991 to 2007, she held the chair for Biological Process Engineering at the University of Hannover. Beyond her academic pursuits, Sabine Kunst has actively engaged in science policy and has held key leadership roles at several academic institutions. Between 2005 and 2007, she served as the Director of International Affairs and as Vice President for Teaching, Studies, and Continuing Education at the University of Hannover. She was president of the University of Potsdam from 2007 to 2010 and president of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) from 2010 to 2011. She then moved into politics, serving as the Minister for Science, Research, and Culture in the state of Brandenburg from 2011 to 2016. From 2016 to the end of 2021, she was president of Humboldt University in Berlin. Since 2022, Sabine Kunst has been Chairwoman of the Board of the Hamburg-based Joachim Herz Foundation.



Former Chairman and CEO of Roland Berger

Burkhard Schwenker is an accomplished strategy consultant and advisor. Formerly Chairman of the Advisory Council, Chairman of the Supervisory Board, and long-time CEO of Roland Berger, Burkhard Schwenker transitioned to the role of Senior Fellow at Roland Berger in 2020. A scholar by training, Burkhard Schwenker earned his degree in mathematics and business administration from the University of Bielefeld, and completed his PhD after gaining management experience as an assistant to the Board of PWA AG. He imparts his knowledge by teaching strategic management at the HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management. Burkhard Schwenker currently serves as Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Hamburger Sparkasse AG and HASPAFinanzholding, and he also sits on the Supervisory Boards of Hamburger Hafen und Logistik AG, Flughafen Hamburg GmbH, and M.M. Warburg & Co. Beyond his professional and academic commitments, Burkhard Schwenker actively participates in several sociopolitical institutions and foundations, including the ZEIT-Stiftung, the Senat der Wirtschaft e.V., the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, and Stiftung Hamburger Kunstsammlungen.



2.

PROGRAMS AND
FELLOWS

The current global economy is overshooting planetary boundaries while billions of people continue to live in poverty. Democracy, liberalism, and globalization – once hailed as the unassailable foundations of progress – now stand on shaky ground.

As societies around the world grapple with economic turmoil, widening wealth disparities, and a planet in peril, the problems with this grand structure are becoming impossible to ignore.

Each program analyzed the potential for the economic system to generate social well-being on a global scale within planetary boundaries and identified key points within the system that must be rethought and leveraged for change. These ranged from specific sectors, such as financial markets and global food production, to business design in the national context of Nigeria, to new concepts for restructuring the economic system itself.

We linked foundational questions about how economic markets work, how they should work, and how we should reform our global governance architecture to concrete problems such as how to redirect financial instruments toward social goals, how to reform food supply chains, and how to incentivize markets to promote alternatives. Given the trans-sectoral and international composition of our fellow groups, our programs moved us beyond the stale debate of whether capitalism as such should be supported or abandoned.

Below, we introduce the activities and pursuits of the programs and the associated fellows.*

* The fellow profiles reflect biographical information that was accurate when fellows arrived at THE NEW INSTITUTE.



Sophie Gladstone, *Home* (from the series *Promise & Demand*) (2021).
Courtesy of the artist.

El Anatsui, *Earth developing more roots* (2011). Courtesy of the artist.



Africapitalism: Shared Entrepreneurship for Economic Development

How are group-owned/community-based businesses economically empowering rural and urban areas in Africa?

Introduction

In alignment with the 2024–2025 academic theme, the *Africapitalism: Shared Entrepreneurship for Economic Development* program worked on rethinking capitalism by anchoring it in the specific cultural and institutional context—or place—where it operates. While capitalism has been a powerful engine for growth, its emphasis on maximizing shareholder value has often generated negative externalities, including inequality, social fragmentation, and environmental degradation. This program, positioned as an action research initiative, called for a context-sensitive capitalism—one that integrates the resolution of local socio-economic challenges into the core strategy of firms and other stakeholders.

In the African context, persistent challenges, such as poor governance, unemployment, corruption, and poverty, form a systemic cycle that undermines sustainable development. The program proposed Africapitalism as a corrective framework: a locally grounded philosophy that positions the African private sector as a central actor in delivering both economic and social value. Africapitalism emphasizes that market-based growth must be combined with efforts to enhance community well-being, promote inclusive participation, and address structural inequalities.

A key innovation explored by the program was the *One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI)*, introduced by the government of Imo State, Nigeria. OKOBI operationalizes Africapitalism by leveraging traditional kinship systems to promote group-based entrepreneurship. It centers shared ownership, collective responsibility, and wealth creation through culturally resonant structures. By integrating indigenous social systems into modern entrepreneurial frameworks, OKOBI offers both a model for inclusive capitalism and a scalable corporate community economic development strategy, particularly relevant for firms seeking to align with Africa's unique socio-economic realities.

Program Chair

Kenneth Amaeshi

Professor of Sustainable Finance and Governance
at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy

The program contributed to the global debate on transforming capitalism into a more inclusive, ethical, and socially responsive system. It critiqued the dominant paradigm for its detachment from place and its failure to adapt to diverse socio-cultural conditions. By introducing OKOBI, the program brought attention to a critical issue often overlooked in mainstream economic discourse: the role of context in shaping viable development outcomes. It added to a growing body of literature that seeks to decolonize development thinking by demonstrating that indigenous models, when adequately supported, can generate equitable growth. OKOBI stands as a compelling case study of how place-based capitalism can foster economic inclusion and systemic resilience, and help resolve the long-standing tension between capital owners (the bourgeoisie) and labor providers (the proletariat) through a collective employee-ownership model.

This approach is particularly relevant given that decades of conventional economic strategies—often backed by donor institutions—have failed to meaningfully reduce poverty or mass unemployment in many African countries. Structural inequalities, weak institutions, and historic disempowerment remain pervasive. Traditional models of intervention frequently overlook the importance of cultural legitimacy, local agency, and relational social capital, which are fundamental to economic life in African societies.

Africapitalism, and specifically the OKOBI model, offers a corrective lens. OKOBI draws from long-standing traditions of kinship networks and collective action to foster entrepreneurship that is socially embedded and economically viable. Its ability to address structural unemployment, mitigate rural–urban migration, and generate inclusive wealth at the grassroots level affirms its relevance and replicability. In less than two years, over 400 functional microenterprises have been enrolled in the OKOBI database, demonstrating the initiative’s practical impact and scalability. These results also align with broader development goals such as SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Several key milestones during the academic year expanded the program’s scope and impact. One major area of achievement was the interdisciplinary collaboration between fellows from academia and industry. These exchanges enriched the theoretical grounding of Africapitalism and informed the program’s primary output: a practical guide for firms and donor organizations on how to implement the OKOBI model as a community-based development tool.

Field engagement was equally instrumental. Direct, immersive interaction with OKOBI-affiliated businesses offered ethnographic insights into how community entrepreneurship is practiced and sustained. These findings informed the selection of finance models and technology partners for potential replication and scaling. Importantly, these field experiences revealed the types of digital infrastructure needed to support OKOBI’s growth—from business management tools to identity verification systems.

To raise awareness and institutionalize key insights, the program invested in strategic public engagement. Research outputs and lessons were disseminated via Nigerian media platforms, helping to shape national discourse around inclusive development and community entrepreneurship. OKOBI’s visibility as a viable solution to unemployment and inequality increased significantly as a result.

During the year, OKOBI also gained traction as a catalyst for multi-sector collaboration. Technology providers initiated discussions around building digital platforms tailored to OKOBI enterprises, aimed at expanding access to markets, improving operational capacity, and increasing transparency. Impact investors and development finance institutions began exploring how the initiative could fit into blended finance models focused on job creation and social returns.

Academic partnerships began to take shape, with universities and research centers offering to evaluate the model’s impact, refine implementation methods, and develop curriculum modules to support training and knowledge transfer. These collaborations are expected to anchor the model within academic discourse and support its broader institutionalization.

Government and private sector actors likewise expressed interest in the model’s potential. Local and state governments are actively assessing how to integrate OKOBI into youth employment, development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), and community growth strategies. In parallel, private firms are exploring how the model’s principles can strengthen their CSR and sustainability frameworks, particularly in contexts where corporate-community alignment is critical to long-term success.

Looking ahead, the program will move into a second phase focused on institutionalization and scale. This next phase will follow three key strategic directions:

- 1. Strengthening Strategic Partnerships: Formalizing current discussions with technology firms, impact investors, development finance institutions (DFIs), and academic collaborators to co-develop digital infrastructure for OKOBI clusters, enable blended finance, and design impact evaluation systems.
- 2. Consulting and Capacity Building: Developing training and consulting modules based on the implementation guide, targeted at corporate CSR teams, entrepreneurship hubs, and government agencies. These materials will support the rollout of OKOBI-based incubators and accelerators, as well as public sector programs.
- 3. Dissemination and Advocacy: Continuing to share program results, methods, and policy implications through academic publications, media coverage, and conferences. These efforts aim to position OKOBI as a replicable and adaptable model for inclusive development across African contexts.

By championing Africapitalism and advancing models like OKOBI, the program contributes to a more pluralistic and equitable understanding of capitalism—one rooted in context, powered by collective agency, and oriented toward building systems that serve rather than extract from the communities they engage.

Fellows

KENNETH AMAESHI

Professor of Sustainable Finance and Governance at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy

Program Chair

September 2024–June 2025

Kenneth Amaeshi is a Professor of Sustainable Finance and Governance at the European University Institute. He is currently on long-term leave from the University of Edinburgh, where he is the Chair in Business and Sustainable Development and Director of Scaling Business in Africa. He is also an Extraordinary Professor of Business in Africa at the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town, South Africa, and was a Visiting Professor of Leadership and Financial Markets in Africa at the London School of Economics. Kenneth is a leading scholar on sustainable business and finance in the Global South. His research has a very strong interface between business and society, particularly national governments in Africa. Since 2015, he has significantly contributed to developing the intellectual foundations of Africapitalism – an economic philosophy for the development of Africa – and championed its mainstreaming in global academia.



Doctoral Researcher at University of Cape Town, South Africa

Exploring the Translation of Africapitalism into Practice Through Institutional Entrepreneurship: Insights from OKOBI Implementation

September 2024–August 2025

Donald Amaeshi has over 20 years of experience in the broad areas of customer service, risk and compliance, and governance, mainly in the telecoms sector and emerging markets. In addition, he has a long-standing interest in entrepreneurship, both in theory and practice, which shaped his master's degree research project at the Durham University Business School, University of Durham (UK), where he studied the relevance of trust to entrepreneurial financing in an informal economy. Donald is interested in the intellectual foundations of practices and is currently a PhD student at the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town, South Africa, where he is conducting doctoral research on how strategic ideas are translated into practice by organizations and institutions. His work on Delayed but not Denied is used in tertiary education institutions both inside and outside Africa.



Executive Director of Tech Herfrica, Abuja, Nigeria

Leveraging Technologies to connect Okobi Businesses to Markets and Investors

January–March 2025

Imade Bibowei-Osuobeni is the Founder and Executive Director of Tech Herfrica and Chief Operating Officer of Her Local Market, an e-commerce platform providing access to markets for women farmers and traders in Nigeria. With over 15 years of experience in public policy development, investment analysis, strategic planning, project and risk management, and organizational change management, Imade has worked with government agencies across Nigeria. At Tech Herfrica, Imade focuses on bridging the gender digital divide and enhancing access to finance, markets, smartphones, and digital and financial literacy for rural women. Under her leadership, Tech Herfrica has designed and implemented programs that have significantly increased literacy, access to finance, and income for rural women and girls. Notably, its EquipHer4Growth initiative won the 2023 SDG Digital Game Changers Award in the People's category from the International Telecommunication Union and was nominated for the 2022 WSIS Prizes.



CEO, Impact Investors Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria

Developing a Sustainable Finance Model for OKOBI

January–March 2025

Maria Etemore Glover is a seasoned development expert with extensive experience in investment and commercial banking, philanthropy, and NGO management. She excels in solving problems, consulting for small businesses, and training in sustainability and SDG Impact Standards. Maria is skilled in developing capacity-building programs for women and youth, as well as in preparing Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) for investments. Her expertise includes administration, public speaking, strategy development, program management, budgeting, fundraising, NGO management, research, and impact measurement and management. She volunteers her spare time to support the development of young girls and women through organized groups such as her alumni association and the Kilali Tribe, a group of professional women from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.



Lecturer, University College, London, United Kingdom

Governance of Community Based Enterprises

January–March 2025

Onya Idoko is Lecturer in Prosperity, Innovation & Entrepreneurship and Co-Program leader of the MSc in Prosperity, Innovation & Entrepreneurship at University College London Institute for Global Prosperity. Her research interest lies at the intersection of creativity and innovation and entrepreneurship studies. Onya is interested in the emergence of novelty, particularly within constrained settings. She explores this through studying how cognitive-affective processes influence creativity and innovation. She is currently studying how the use of new technologies can impact creativity and the imagination and enable the generation of new ways of organizing. Onya is also interested in how novel business models are formed, particularly how developmental entrepreneurship models that have a transformative impact on communities and regions emerge. She is part of a team of researchers studying how regenerative innovations emerge and transform the innovation economy within a region.



Lecturer, University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo, Nigeria

OKOBI as a Corporate Community Economic Development Strategy: Implications for Corporate Governance Models

September–December 2024

Jude Chukwunyere Iwuoha currently serves as a lecturer in the Department of Entrepreneurship Studies at the University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo, Imo State, Nigeria. Jude has extensive experience in business development, operations management, administration, teaching, and research, spanning both industry and academia. Jude holds a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria, and a master's degree and PhD in Economics (Development Economics) from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria, where he researched the impact of fiscal policy on Nigeria's macroeconomic performance (1975–2017). Jude's academic contributions include numerous publications and conference presentations on economic stability, fiscal policy, and sustainable development.



Associate Professor, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Building Regenerative Seafood Supply Chains with Social Justice for Marginalized Small-Scale Fishing

May–June 2025

Camille Meyer is an Associate Professor in Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship and director of the Executive MBA at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, South Africa. His teaching and research adopt an interdisciplinary perspective to shed light on entrepreneurial, financial, and ethical processes involved in the management of social innovations and natural resources. This perspective considers new approaches to business, such as developing new financial models, social innovations, collaborative management, and stakeholder partnerships for commons governance. His previous work in higher education includes academic roles at the Free University of Brussels (ULB, Belgium) and the University of Victoria (Canada). Prior to moving into higher education, he worked for the international training center of the International Labour Organization in Turin (Italy).



Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact Nigeria

Developing One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI) as Economic Development Strategy

May–June 2025

Naomi is a dual licensed American and Nigerian attorney and counselor at law, well versed in the field of international development law. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact Nigeria, the country office of the UN Secretary General's world's largest corporate sustainability initiative. Under Naomi's leadership, the UN Global Compact Nigeria has become a leading voice for sustainability and responsible corporate practices in Nigeria. She sits on the board of Prince Sultan University Climate Sustainability Center and was twice elected Chairperson of the United Nations Global Compact Regional Network Council, which represents eleven African country offices of the UN Global Compact at the Global Network Council (GNC) New York. Naomi was listed among the 50 African Women in Development Awards in 2022.the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.



Director, IHS Towers, Lagos, Nigeria

A Practical Implementation Model for the One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI)

September–December 2024

Cima has over 17 years of experience in sub-Saharan Africa, working with business leaders to integrate sustainability strategies, drive large-scale community investment projects, and advise on regulatory and policy matters. She has been involved in initiatives such as the Nigerian Sustainable Banking Principles and Sector Guidelines, Corporate Governance Rating System for the Nigerian Stock Exchange, Nigerian Capital Market Sustainability Disclosure guidelines, and the Telecommunications and Technology Sustainability Working Group. Cima is a Fellow of the Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability, and has participated in various executive education programs, including at the Harvard Business School and the Yale School of Management. Cima was recognized as part of WeForGood's International 100 Women Creating a Better Africa in 2020 and 2021, and received the Africa Sustainability Professional of the Year Award at the 2022 seras Africa csr/Sustainability Awards, and the Sustainability Influencer of the Year Award from the Social Impact and Sustainability Awards.



CEO, Systemic Innovation, London, United Kingdom

Scaling Africapitalism

January–March 2025

Scott Walker is the founding partner at Systemic Innovation, advising the public and private sector clients on strategy, innovation, systems change, government relations, public policy, corporate affairs, research, and sustainability. He specializes in complex consulting solutions, helping clients implement strategies for positive social impact. Scott’s career spans significant roles at the intersection of innovation and public affairs, collaborating with governments, corporations, scale-ups, NGOs, and academic institutions. His educational background includes degrees in politics, law, international affairs, and public administration, plus postgraduate studies and participation at the THNK School of Creative Leadership. Notable projects include co-authoring “Scaling in Africa,” developing a data collaborative for high-growth firms in East Africa, and advising governments on systems-related projects, SME growth, and employment. His research has been presented at Davos, the White House, and the UN.



Events and Activities

04–06.06.25

Africapitalism Conference

THE NEW INSTITUTE hosted a high-level international conference on Africapitalism, convened by Professor Kenneth Amaeshi, to explore new models of capitalism grounded in African values, community agency, and shared prosperity. The purpose was to engage a diverse group of global leaders, policymakers, academics, and private sector actors in critically assessing Africapitalism’s practical relevance and global resonance.

Conducted under Chatham House Rules to foster open and constructive dialogue, the conference brought together senior representatives from the African Union, the governments of Nigeria and Kenya, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), as well as scholars and entrepreneurs.



Participants examined how OKOBI operationalizes the principles of Africapitalism by leveraging kinship networks to build group-owned enterprises that generate employment, reduce poverty, and promote dignity through collective ownership. Discussions also explored its incorporation into Nigeria's Human Capital Development Accelerator Projects and the release of the OKOBI Handbook, a practical guide for scaling community-led enterprise.

The conference marked a significant step in positioning Africapitalism not only as an African response to global economic challenges, but as a viable, internationally relevant framework for reimagining capitalism. It demonstrated how locally rooted, socially inclusive models can offer effective solutions to systemic issues of disempowerment, inequality, and extractive growth.





Jan Hoelt, Processes (2023). Courtesy of the artist.

Beyond Capitalism: War Economy and Democratic Planning

In the face of the unfolding planetary catastrophe, how can we establish a more egalitarian and sustainable society through a democratically structured “war economy” and a corresponding new notion of freedom and progress?

Introduction

Like other contemporary intellectual movements addressing climate breakdown and the global polycrisis, the Beyond Capitalism program claimed that these challenges are linked to the structural contradictions of capitalism. What set the program apart was its refusal to stop at critique. It argued that capitalism was not simply inconsistent—it was at the root of the crisis itself and therefore could not offer a solution. “When it comes to the Global North, green capitalism is a myth” was one of the program’s points of departure.

The program drew on Karl Marx and early 20th-century thinkers like Otto Neurath, who questioned the assumed rationality of market economies. It challenged values such as “market freedom” and “eternal economic growth.” Market logic, it said, needs to be restrained, because capitalism prioritizes profit over necessity. The poor become poorer, while wealth continues to accumulate at the top. The climate crisis intensifies these dynamics, creating a state of chronic emergency and bringing about rapid civilizational breakdown.

In this context, the program explored alternatives—ranging from initial steps, such as socializing investment in public infrastructure, to large-scale models like a “war economy”. Estimation of the future also ranged from more optimistic and hopeful narratives (saying that transition is possible), to more pessimistic views marked by disillusionment with the coping techniques that the present can offer us for achieving a better future.

At the heart of this was a renewed conversation about socialism—not as a return to rigid models of the past, but as an open inquiry into what democratic planning could look like in the present. Historical lessons from socialization formed a major part of the program, as did the tensions between centralized planning and bottom-up transformation.

Program Chair

Kohei Saito
Associate Professor of Philosophy,
University of Tokyo, Japan

At the same time, the program asked how democracy, freedom, and prosperity—core values associated with the Enlightenment epoch which are worth preserving beyond capitalism—could be redefined to support a more equitable and sustainable future. It examined how a socialist and Marxist framework might incorporate ecological boundaries and a logic of collective care. Could democratic planning exist without authoritarian control? Could it respond to social and environmental needs more effectively than market mechanisms? How can we coordinate increasingly limited resources? These were the central questions that the Beyond Capitalism program brought to the forefront.

From September 2024 to April 2025, the program's core team included Kohei Saito and Aaron Benanav. Both were in the process of writing new books during this time.

Within his book project, Kohei Saito called for immediate decarbonization and examined the foundations and limits of his concept of a war economy—an economy directed by the state rather than the free market, determining what is produced and with which resources. He questioned what kind of socialism is possible in the context of climate collapse and explored whether socialism should rethink its goals and value—from individual emancipation to collective survival. Saito wondered: if we adopt the survival scenario, can principles like equality, solidarity, and justice still serve as the foundation for this form of socialism, even as it unfolds under the harsh conditions of a collapsing world?

Aaron Benanav's project proposed the idea of a multi-dimensional economy—one that reflects the full range of human values beyond economic efficiency, such as meaning, autonomy, care, and connection. He argued that addressing this broader set of priorities demands a restructuring of how economies are governed (or rather coordinated), how firms are evaluated, and how investment decisions are made. Societies, he argued, inevitably face trade-offs among competing goals, but hard choices have to be made. The aim, for Benanav, is not consensus but collective judgment: to build democratic mechanisms through which people can argue, decide, and shape economic priorities together.

Together, Kohei Saito and Aaron Benanav discovered overlapping points in their two models. In February 2025, they were joined by Matthias Schmelzer, who contributed a unique perspective on the possible concrete institutions

for planning beyond growth in the context of ecological limits. They were also supported by guest contributors from two workshops—one on the legitimacy crisis of neoliberal capitalism (November 2024) and another on socializing investment and green transition (March 2025). Discussions also took place with another program from the academic year 2024–2025, Futures of Capitalism. This exchange proved insightful as it opened up ways of thinking about coordinated investment—whether through central planning or venture capital—as scalable, practical alternatives for organizing growth beyond profit. When Melinda Cooper later joined the Futures of Capitalism program, the cross-program overlap became even more prominent. Cooper critiques simplistic anti-finance narratives and she explores how financial tools (like credit) can be redirected toward progressive ends. For Benanav, that spoke to his idea of decentralized planning, for Saito it spoke to his idea of credit guidance for decarbonization.

In May–June 2025, Cédric Durand, Kirstin Munro, Tatjana Söding, and Troy Vettese joined the Beyond Capitalism program. These four new fellows introduced a new routine of intensive weekly reading seminars. There were quite a few insights there. For instance, “ecological knowledge” differs (or should differ) from knowledge produced by the market and capital because it is decentralized, but what does it mean for knowledge to be decentralized? Another example is rewilding: is it a form of coordination with nature or yet another act of usurping it? Or what are the conceptual differences between profitability and productivity, and between a “model of economy” and an “ideology of economy”?

As a next step, Saito, Benanav, Durand, Söding, and Vettese worked on a joint manifesto setting out values of ecosocialism: to liberate nature from capitalist reification, to emancipate humanity by abolishing class society, to de-monopolize knowledge, and to build a democratic economy governed by needs. They called for rewilding and reduced meat consumption, challenged the commodification of knowledge, promoted meaningful work over alienating jobs, and demanded public, pluralistic control over science, technology, and planning. Maybe democratic survival in the 21st century is possible after all.

Fellows

KOHEI SAITO

Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Tokyo, Japan
September 2024–June 2025

Kohei Saito is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tokyo. He received his PhD from Humboldt University in Berlin. He works on ecology and political economy from a Marxist perspective. His latest bestseller, *Capital in the Anthropocene*, has been credited with inspiring a resurgence of interest in Marxist thought throughout Japan. Due to his desire to continue his research on post-capitalism and the Anthropocene, he felt the need to interact with theories and practices that are rapidly developing in Europe, especially in Germany, as a response to the deepening of the climate and economic crises.



AARON BENANAV

Assistant Professor, Cornell University, USA
Post-Scarcity Economics
September 2024–June 2025

Aaron Benanav is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Global Development at Cornell University. His first book, *Automation and the Future of Work*, appeared with Verso in 2020 and has been translated into 10 languages. Aaron's writing has been featured in *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *Boston Review*, and *New Left Review*. His research interests include technological change, unemployment, economic development, critical theory, and alternative economic systems. Currently, he is working on two book projects. One concerns the idea of a “post-scarcity” economics. The other examines the global history of unemployment. Before he joined Cornell University, Benanav was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Syracuse University. He holds a PhD in History from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a BA in History from the University of Chicago. Aaron serves on the editorial board of the *New Left Review* and is a senior editor at *International Labor and Working Class History*.



CÉDRIC DURAND

Professor of Political Economy, University of Geneva, Switzerland
Prospects for Ecological Planning
May–June 2025

Cédric Durand is a Professor of Political Economy at the University of Geneva. His research focuses on the transformation of contemporary capitalism. In the tradition of Marxism and the French regulation school, he studies unequal development in the context of globalization, the financialization of economies, processes of intellectual monopolization, and the question of planning and eco-socialist bifurcation. In addition to articles in leading academic journals such as *World Development*, the *Review of International Political Economy*, the *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, and the *Socio-Economic Review*, he is the author of *Fictitious Capital: How Finance Is Appropriating Our Future* (2017), *How Silicon Valley Unleashed Techno-Feudalism: The Making of the Digital Economy* (2024), and *Comment Bifurquer: Les principes de la planification écologique* (with Razmig Keucheyan, 2024). He is a regular contributor to the radical online journal *Contretemps* and to *Sidecar*, the blog of the *New Left Review*.



KIRSTIN MUNRO

Assistant Professor of Economics, The New School for Social Research, New York, USA

Consumption and the Critique of Political Economy

May–June 2025

Kirstin Munro is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the New School for Social Research in New York, where she teaches econometrics, the political economy of gender, and the history of economic thought. Her book, *The Production of Everyday Life in Eco-conscious Households: Conflict, Compromise, Complicity*, was published by Bristol University Press in 2023. Prior to completing her PhD, Kirstin worked as an econometrician on demand forecasting in regulated industries, specializing in the relationship between technological change and demand for products whose prices are not determined by markets. Her current research examines labor, both paid and unpaid, and its relationship to consumption and production processes; the production, distribution, and consumption of energy; and critiques of individual, corporate, and government sustainability efforts. She has been involved in anti-war and leftist movements for over 25 years.



TATJANA SÖDING

Freelance Journalist, Researcher, Zetkin Collective, Berlin, Germany

Half-Earth Socialism in Germany

May–June 2025

Tatjana Söding is a freelance journalist based in Berlin and a researcher with the Zetkin Collective. She received her MSc in Human Ecology from Lund University and has since focused on researching the political ecology of the far right, particularly in Germany. She is active in the climate justice movement and is a fellow of the graduate college Socio-Ecological Transformation of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation. Tatjana researches climate obstruction strategies from the far-right to the progressive camp. She also seeks ways to create a future where nature and society are not subjected to capitalist pressures.



TROY VETTESE

Post-doctoral Fellow, University of California, Berkeley, USA

Half- Earth Socialism in Germany

May–June 2025

Troy Vettese is a Ciriacy-Wantrup post-doctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley. He obtained his PhD from New York University and master's degrees from NYU, St Andrews, and Oxford, and has held research fellowships at the University of Copenhagen, the European University Institute, and Harvard University. Together with Drew Pendergrass, Troy co-authored the manifesto *Half-Earth Socialism* (Verso, 2022), which has been discussed in *Jewish Currents*, *New Statesman*, *Le Monde*, and the *Ecologist*, and has been translated into Swedish, Italian, Thai, Korean, and Spanish. He also helped design a video game based on the book. He is currently writing a monograph on neoliberal environmental thought and editing a volume on Marxist animal studies. Troy's popular writing has appeared in *n+1*, *The Guardian*, *Jacobin*, *Boston Review*, and *Bookforum*.



Events and Activities

26.11.24

From Market to Planning: A Marxist Perspective

For this workshop, THE NEW INSTITUTE welcomed three guests to address the question of a legitimacy crisis of neoliberal capitalism and to ask what potentially could come next. Ryuji Sasaki (Rikkyo University, Japan) showed how capitalism and market economy have monopolized social cooperation (commerce, credit systems) in the same way feudalism once monopolized land. As Alyssa Battistoni (Barnard College, USA) further pointed out, according to Marx, both social relations and land are not merely free gifts but rather commons—products of long-term metabolism and human activity that no single person can claim ownership of, but that everyone coordinates. She proposed a model of planning that involves “socializing nature for conscious planet-making.” Utopian as it may seem, Søren Mau (Denmark) argued that Marxists should reassess their critiques of “mere utopian ideas” as inefficient, impossible, or undesirable. If we define utopias as the best possible solutions, they may serve as powerful drivers of material change.

20.02.25

Matthias Schmelzer: “Growth, Degrowth and Planning in the Age of Ecological Collapse”

In this talk, Matthias Schmelzer argued that productivism and the principle of sufficiency can coexist within a vision of a “postgrowth future.” According to Schmelzer, the hegemony of growth has led to an over-fixation on maximizing GDP and optimizing technologies. In contrast, the degrowth perspective seeks to bring political debate back into how we think about the economy and our use of natural and social resources. Schmelzer discussed how we might design institutions that support planning without relying on growth, and how setting limits on resource use could still be compatible with democratic decision-making. He also identified key areas where policies could support this type of planning, and showed how a democratic, socially, and ecologically focused approach could challenge and dismantle misleading narratives that continue to promote growth as the only path forward.



17.03.25

Degrowth, Planning, Transformation

This workshop, co-organized by the University of Hamburg’s Futures of Sustainability research group and THE NEW INSTITUTE, explored how economic degrowth can be planned and governed in response to the climate crisis. Kohei Saito and Matthias Schmelzer opened the event with reflections on dismantling and restructuring capitalist economies. Further sessions examined macroeconomic and political perspectives on degrowth (Mechthild Schrooten, Christoph Sorg), as well as issues of care and reproduction (Heide Lutosch, with commentary by Christa Wichterich). On the second day, a roundtable featuring Sophie Lampl (Greenpeace) and Mario Candeias (RLS) discussed democratic pathways to transformation. Eva von Redecker, Alex Demirović, and Ulrich Brand introduced the concept of “solidarity-based resilience,” followed by a panel on how cities can embody such principles. The workshop emphasized the need for participatory planning and new models of prosperity beyond growth.



25.03.25

“How Do We Get There? The Socialization of Investment and the Green Transition in Historical and Contemporary Perspective”

This workshop convened another three guests of THE NEW INSTITUTE to discuss what “transition” and “socialization” are—both conceptually and practically. Daniela Gabor (SOAS, University of London) argued that outsourcing the green transition to private capital is a mistake—markets are neither fast nor fair enough to drive meaningful decarbonization. Instead, she called for using public funds to invest directly in clean industries and for holding private firms accountable when they fall short of climate targets. Neil Warner (LSE) discussed the efforts to socialize investment during the 1970s and 1980s, why these efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, and what lessons they offered for similar programs today. Jacob Blumenfeld (Humboldt University of Berlin) spoke about the 1910s–1920s debates on the concept of “socialization” and the forms it could take.



18.06.25

Drew Pendergrass: “A Curious Natural Selection: János Kornai’s Evolutionary Theory of Socialist Institutions”

Drew Pendergrass, an environmental scientist affiliated with Harvard University and co-author of *Half-Earth Socialism* (Verso 2022), explored the institutional dynamics of socialist planning through the work of Hungarian economist János Kornai. He contrasted capitalism’s separation of politics and economics—governed by what Marx called capital’s “mute compulsion”—with socialism’s aim to reunite the two under democratic control. Focusing on Kornai’s attempt to use linear programming and computer modelling to improve central planning in 1960s Hungary, Pendergrass described a technically successful effort that nonetheless failed to produce lasting reform. The problem, Kornai argued, was not informational, but structural: socialist institutions had evolved into a self-reinforcing system resistant to change. Pendergrass suggested that Kornai’s account highlights the limits of technocratic fixes and the need for democratic mechanisms that avoid both market domination and top-down control. He concluded by reflecting on the implications for planning and institutional design during ecological crisis.



Marcel Broodthaers,
Daguerre's Soup (1975).
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Broodthaers / VG Bild-
Kunst, Bonn 2024.



The Future of Food: Power and Biodiversity

How can harnessing biodiversity enable
progressive power shifts in the food
system?

Introduction

The Future of Food: Power and Biodiversity, a program chaired by José Luis Chicoma, began with pressing questions: what forms of power asymmetries sustain the status quo in global food systems?; who benefits from the way the system is structured?; and who impedes change toward a more equitable, resilient, and socially just food system? Over the course of a year-long interdisciplinary inquiry, fellows Sayed Azam-Ali, Jessica Duncan, María Mideros, Emma McDonell, Nicolás Rovegno, Chris Vogliano, and Kristin Reynolds examined how power shapes food systems at every level—from what is grown and where, to who eats what, who governs this system, and who is excluded from it. They interrogated the structures through which concentrated control over land, markets, institutions, and narratives have produced systems that are ecologically fragile, socially unjust, and politically unbalanced.

What became clear is that global food systems are far more fragile than they appear. Despite often being praised for their scale and productivity, they’ve shown themselves to be poorly equipped to handle disruption. Climate volatility, geopolitical unrest, conflict, and the erosion of international cooperation have exposed the deeper vulnerabilities of systems designed for efficiency, not equity. These overlapping crises aren’t just a string of unfortunate events—they’re symptoms of a system that’s failing by design.

At the heart of this fragility lies a paradox. Food systems have become more productive and globally integrated than ever before, yet they still fail to deliver affordable, nutritious food to billions of people. A few countries dominate exports, a handful of crops make up most of what we eat, and a small group of multinational corporations controls the key nodes of production—from seeds and fertilizer to processing and distribution. This concentration of power has undermined resilience and narrowed the range of possible reforms, making it harder for alternative food systems to gain traction.

Program Chair

José Luis Chicoma
Global Expert on Food Systems,
Mexico City, Mexico

The Future of Food program challenged the idea that these are broken systems in need of technical fixes. Instead, it argued that food systems are working exactly as intended—for those who benefit from the status quo. The program asked what it would take to fundamentally shift power, toward more equitable access to resources, more inclusive governance, and more diverse, locally grounded ways of producing and sharing food.

The research that fellows have conducted will culminate in two major publications by THE NEW INSTITUTE. A policy report titled “The Elephant at the Table: Policy Pathways to Confront Power in Food Systems” will be published in autumn 2025. It offers bold and actionable policy proposals across six core themes: governance and participation, agroecology and seed systems, fisheries and aquaculture, food supply chains, nutrition and diets, and neglected and underutilized species (NUS). Alongside these proposals, the report engages in a rich analysis of power asymmetries in food systems—examining how control over land, markets, governance structures, and knowledge shapes systemic outcomes. The recommendations go beyond incremental reform, offering proposals to reduce corporate concentration and embed justice and ecological sustainability in the governance of food systems.

In 2026, an edited book will follow, expanding on the material developed through the program. Rather than simply diagnosing what is broken, the book examines why food systems continue to fail and who stands to gain from this failure. It offers a novel and comprehensive analysis of power asymmetries across the six core themes of the report, showing how structural power asymmetries have locked food systems into extractive and inequitable patterns.

The work of the program will continue beyond the end of the fellowship. Its findings will be presented at major global forums. Fellows will contribute to public and policy discourse through academic publications, media engagement, and partnerships with civil society organizations, research institutions, and philanthropic foundations.

At a time when multiple crises intersect, The Future of Food program offers a clear and urgent message: food systems are not simply dysfunctional, they are structured in ways that benefit a powerful minority while externalizing harm to people and ecosystems. The program challenges these systems by uncovering the political logic that sustains them and by proposing alternative approaches that prioritize democratic participation, institutional plurality, and the public good. By focusing on power as both the problem and the solution, the program provides a foundation for meaningful and lasting transformation.



Fellows

JOSE LUIS CHICOMA

Global Expert on Food Systems, Mexico City, Mexico
Program Chair
September 2024–June 2025

José Luis Chicoma serves as Senior Advisor on Global Food Systems for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). He is also a member of a team of experts that is developing a report on strengthening urban food systems for the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN). He has been a consultant on food systems for international organizations, such as the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Inter-American Development Bank. José Luis served as Minister of Production (2020–2021) and Vice Minister of Micro and Small Enterprises and Industry (2009–2010) of the Republic of Peru. From 2012 to 2020, he was Executive Director of Ethos, a Mexican think tank that promotes development and sustainable food systems.



SAYED AZAM-ALI

CEO, Crops for the Future, Cambridge, United Kingdom
How Can Harnessing Biodiversity Enable Progressive Power Shifts in the Food System?
September–December 2024

Sayed Azam-Ali is the founding CEO of Crops for the Future (CFF), the global center for research on the world’s underutilized and forgotten crops. He is also Chair (Emeritus) in Global Food Security at the University of Nottingham. In 2021, he was awarded an OBE for “services to underutilized crops and increasing global food security”, and in 2023 was appointed to the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the UN Committee on World Food Security. Sayed is a past Chair of the Association of International Research and Development Centers for Agriculture and is a regular advisor to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research and Innovation. He holds a BSc degree in Plant Biology from the University of Wales and a PhD in Environmental Physics from the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *The Ninth Revolution: Transforming Food Systems for Good* (2021).

Photo by Claus Rottenbacher



JESSICA DUNCAN

Associate Professor in the Politics of Food Systems Transformations, Wageningen University, The Netherlands
The Politics of Food Systems Transformation with a Focus on Power, Governance and Future Visions
January–March 2025

Jessica Duncan is a scholar and educator committed to social-ecological justice. She is an Associate Professor in the Politics of Food Systems Transformations at the Rural Sociology Group, Wageningen University. Jessica holds a PhD in Food Policy from City University London (2014). Her research pioneers new ways of understanding and imagining food governance processes to support just and sustainable transformations. Her teaching has been recognized by a number of awards, including Teacher of the Year at Wageningen University (2017). Jessica sits on the Editorial Board for the journal *Sociologia Ruralis* and is a founding member of and ambassador for the Centre for Unusual Collaborations. She is currently chairing the Scientific Committee for the European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS) and recently served as an expert on the EU Standing Committee for Agricultural Research’s 5th Foresight Report on resilience and transformation.



Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, USA

The Quinoa Bust: The Making and Unmaking of an Andean Miracle Crop

May–June 2025

Emma McDonell is a cultural, economic, and environmental anthropologist interested in the applications of ethnographic research to real world problems. She is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. Her expertise lies in the intersections of food systems, global markets, sustainable development, and race/racism in Latin America and, in particular, the cultural and economic politics of neglected and under-utilized crops. Emma was a Fulbright Scholar (Peru, 2016) and has taught anthropology at Indiana University, Butler University, and the University of Zürich. Her research has been published in *Gastronomica*, *Agriculture & Human Values*, and the *Latin American Research Review*. Her forthcoming book, *The Quinoa Bust: The Making and Unmaking of an Andean Miracle Crop* (University of California Press) traces the unintended consequences of the quinoa boom and bust in the Peruvian Andes, drawing on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Puno, Peru.



Director, Agri-food Systems Research Center, University of the Andes (Colombia)

Comprehensive Analysis of Colombian Agri-Food Systems: A Systemic Approach Through Agroecology, Agrobiodiversity, Governance, and Local Food Systems

September–December 2024

María Fernanda Mideros Bastidas is the Director of the Agri-food Systems Research Center at the University of the Andes (Colombia). A biologist with a master's and PhD in Science from the University of the Andes, she has always been motivated to use her scientific vocation to discover practical solutions to address major farming challenges in Latin America. As a co-founder and current Director of the Agri-food Systems Research Center (Centro ISA), she has successfully forged robust partnerships with national and global academic and government organizations. Her efforts have been focused on driving progress in research to establish the University of the Andes as a prominent institution within the food system sector. María's current research interest focuses on understanding how agroecology, biodiversity, and soil health models drive the transition pathways towards sustainable climate-resilient food systems in Colombia.



Associate Professor of Food Studies, The New School for Social Research, New York, USA

May–June 2025

Kristin Reynolds is Chair and Associate Professor of Food Studies at The New School in New York. Her work examines power structures in the global food system with a focus on creating socially just food systems. This has included research on the social justice implications of urban agriculture in New York City, Paris, and in federal US policy; on rural heritage grain production and food sovereignty, and inequities experienced by immigrant and racialized farmworkers in France. Kristin is an Affiliated Faculty member at the Yale Center for Environmental Justice and Associate Research Fellow at the European School of Political and Social Sciences in Lille, France. She has worked with many community-based organizations and farms. She holds a PhD in Geography and an M.S. in International Agricultural Development from the University of California, Davis.



Regional Coordinator, Fisheries Transparency Initiative, Latin America, Peru

Blue Foods

September–December 2024

Nicolás Rovegno Arrese is a Fisheries Engineer with an MSc in Marine Sciences and a consultant for national and international organizations. He has extensive experience working at the intersection of science, policy, and sustainable development, with a strong focus on advancing transparency and responsible fisheries management, having worked in civil society, government, and as a national and international seafood consultant. Currently, Nicolás serves as the Latin American Regional Coordinator for the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI), where he has secured commitments from the region's first countries to enhance transparency around fisheries. Nicolás also led the development and pilot testing of the first digital traceability system for mahi-mahi and jumbo squid at WWF Perú, contributing to more transparent and sustainable seafood supply chains. With a career that spans diverse roles in research, policy advising, and program implementation, Nicolás is committed to improving the livelihoods of fishing communities while promoting sustainable practices.



Postdoctoral Researcher, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

Scaling Neglected and Underutilized Species, Including Aquatic Species, for Global Food Security and Climate Change Adaptation

May–June 2025

Chris is a public health dietitian with expertise connecting the dots between agriculture, nutrition, and health, aiming to foster sustainable diets. He is a co-founder and director of global research for the non-profit Food + Planet and a former Technical Advisor with USAID Advancing Nutrition. Chris collaborated with Harvard University and Gallup on the Global Diet Quality Project, pioneering diet quality monitoring system in over 100 countries. He has led significant research on Indigenous Food Systems for the UN FAO, aiding the development of the Solomon Islands National Dietary Guidelines. A dedicated advocate for sustainable food systems, Chris has created practical tools to enhance nutrition for vulnerable groups, contributed to high-level conferences, and conducted research linking food security with environmental sustainability.



Strategic Advisor and Consultant, USA

Biodiversity, Food, and Health Governance

January–March 2025

Liz Willetts is a Strategic Advisor and Consultant on biodiversity and health, planetary health, and One Health for UN institutions, governments, health and environmental organizations, and philanthropies, among others. She is an expert in interdisciplinary policy analysis and communications with experience in mobilizing knowledge and engagement on biodiversity, climate change, pollution, food systems, and community health for marginalized populations. She has written science-policy guides and briefs for numerous organizations including the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the World Health Organization. Recruited as Planetary Health Policy Director for the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, she served this role as visiting scholar for the 2023–2024 year. Liz is an Instructor of the Global Governance of the Health-Environment Nexus at the University of Edinburgh Global Health Academy and is the Lead on Nature & Mental Health for the IUDN CEM Ecosystem Management and Human Health Thematic Group.



Events and Activities

06.10.24

Hamburg Sustainability Conference: “How to Make Food Systems Better for People and Planet”

As a prelude to the Hamburg Sustainability Conference 2024, THE NEW INSTITUTE hosted a public event that convened leading researchers and policymakers to explore actionable strategies for transforming food systems in alignment with climate and biodiversity goals. The evening featured presentations by our fellows Jessica Duncan, Sayed Azam-Ali, and Maja Groff, each offering solution-oriented proposals. These presentations were followed by a panel discussion with Achim Steiner (UNDP), José Luis Chicoma, and Martin Frick (World Food Programme), moderated by journalist Conny Czymoch. The discourse centered on elevating the role of food systems in international negotiations and policy frameworks, emphasizing the necessity for integrated approaches that address both human and planetary health. This event underscored the importance of cross-sector collaboration in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and informed the ongoing work of the program.

04–06.03.25 **Advisory Committee Meeting**

THE NEW INSTITUTE hosted an intimate and focused meeting of the Advisory Committee for The Future of Food: Power and Biodiversity. The purpose was to engage a select group of international experts in testing the strategic direction of the program, deepening its proposals for impact, and forming a network for ongoing inspiration and dissemination. Conducted under Chatham House Rules to encourage open and candid exchange, the meeting brought together renowned global experts from the World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Biovision Foundation, the Agroecology Coalition, The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Slow Food International, CARE, and Bioversity International. Together, participants offered critical insights, evaluated key proposals, and helped refine a transformative agenda grounded in equity, resilience, and biodiversity.



23.04.25 **UN Task Force on Food Systems Online Meeting**

José Luis Chicoma participated in a virtual meeting of the UN Task Force on Food Systems, which brought together representatives from key UN agencies working on food and nutrition policy. Chicoma presented on the role of power asymmetries in shaping global food systems, emphasizing how concentrated control over land, markets, and decision-making processes limits the reach of equitable and sustainable reforms.

17–18.04.25 **Perry World House Conference: “Feeding a Climate-Changed World”**

José Luis Chicoma represented THE NEW INSTITUTE at the “Feeding a Climate-Changed World” conference hosted by Perry World House at the University of Pennsylvania. Speaking on the impacts of urbanization and climate change on global diets, he examined how power asymmetries shape nutrition outcomes—highlighting the diversion of nutrient-rich anchoveta into fishmeal, the extraction of superfoods from the Global South, and the marginalization of traditional markets and agroecological practices. Emphasizing that “the world doesn’t need more cheap calories,” Chicoma underscored the urgent need to make healthy food affordable and accessible—especially for those who need it most. He outlined four key policy shifts: redirect subsidies toward agroecology; reform fisheries policy to prioritize local consumption; expand school meal programs that source from smallholder farmers; and invest in traditional markets, which remain critical for delivering diverse, nutritious foods. The conference provided a valuable platform to share the program’s transformative agenda and engage global policymakers in building equitable, climate-resilient food systems.

28–29.05.25 **First International Symposium on Food System Transformation in Mexico**

José Luis Chicoma took part in a landmark gathering on the future of food systems in Mexico, hosted by the Escuela de Gobierno at Tecnológico de Monterrey. In a session on the political economy of food systems, Chicoma offered commentary on how global and local power asymmetries shape the outcomes of food policy, access, and governance. He emphasized the need to center equity, biodiversity, and democratic participation in food system reform—highlighting THE NEW INSTITUTE’s work on nutrition justice, agroecology, and territorial markets. His intervention contributed to broader discussions on reconfiguring food systems through structural, multisectoral change aligned with Mexico’s new legislative framework on sustainable food policy.

03.06.25 **Hamburg Sustainability Conference: “Working with Informality: Food, Livelihoods, and the Path to Resilient Communities”**

THE NEW INSTITUTE co-hosted a compelling public dialogue with TMG Think Tank on the transformative role of informality in building resilient, equitable food systems. Recognizing that 60% of the global workforce participates in informal economies, speakers highlighted how informal food vendors, school meal initiatives, and community-led safety nets are vital levers for food access, decent livelihoods, and climate resilience. The event featured Jes Weigelt (Managing Director, TMG Research), Ann Wanjiru Mbuthia (Coordinator, Mathare Legal Aid & Human Rights Advocacy – MLAHRA), and Nina Wolff (Chair, Slow Food Germany). Future of Food program chair José Luis Chicoma emphasized the need to “work with informality rather than hope it will be eclipsed,” drawing attention to strategies that respect local dynamics and protect food justice. The conversation generated fresh inspiration and fostered a network poised to disseminate insights across policy, research, and grassroots practice.

23–25.06.25

Wilton Park: “Food Systems and Power: Towards Collective Action for Systemic Change”

José Luis Chicoma participated in a high-level roundtable on power dynamics in food systems, hosted by Wilton Park in the UK in partnership with UNDP and EIT Food. In a session titled “Understanding Power Dynamics in Food Systems”, Chicoma presented the program’s work on food and power to explore how entrenched power asymmetries—across markets, governance, and knowledge—undermine progress toward equitable, sustainable, and healthy food systems. He contributed to discussions on how global actors shape policy outcomes, distort food environments, and constrain reform. The event brought together policymakers, academics, and civil society leaders to co-develop strategies for addressing hidden and structural power imbalances.





Claudia Andujar, *Arquivo tratado por Instituto Moreira Salles* (2018).
Courtesy of the artist.

Planetary Governance

How do we design and implement the needed global governance reforms to address the planetary emergency?

Introduction

There is an urgent need to implement new approaches, frameworks, and institutions for planetary governance to maintain the viability of our Earth system. The Climate Governance Commission laid out a series of proposals in their flagship report “Governing Our Planetary Emergency” (2023). At THE NEW INSTITUTE, the Planetary Government program focused on the analysis and implementation of a number of these proposals, including:

1. A declaration by the UN General Assembly on “planetary emergency”

Some countries, cities, and institutions have declared a state of emergency in the face of the climate crisis and the overstepping of Planetary Boundaries. But this has not yet happened at the international level, nor has there yet been a high-level recognition of the gravity and scale of the Earth system risks we are facing. One of the main goals of the program at THE NEW INSTITUTE was to further develop the draft content for such a UN General Assembly declaration.

2. Establishing an International Environmental Court

Similar to the International Criminal Court, which has jurisdiction over serious war crimes and crimes against humanity, among others, an International Environmental Court could have jurisdiction over relevant international climate and environmental disputes and, for example, assist in holding states to their promises. But what exactly would the court’s powers be? Which cases would it hear? How would it be funded? “So far, the ideas for an International Environmental Court have been mostly discussed in abstraction,” said program chair Maja Groff. “We worked on establishing the foundations for a process to develop a credible, concrete, and stress-tested proposal.” Groff drew on her experience of developing a model treaty for an International Anti-Corruption Court, which already has the support of many countries and organizations (and was drafted in part at THE NEW INSTITUTE). The foundations for a similar process for an International Environmental Court were laid during the Planetary Governance program at THE NEW INSTITUTE.

Program Chair

Maja Groff

Convenor, Climate Governance Commission, The Hague, The Netherlands

3. Measures to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with the development of a Global Environmental Agency

“Next-generation” global environmental governance is clearly needed in the face of ever-growing Earth system risks and recognition that all countries will need to work together to address these risks. UNEP has proven a key stakeholder in coordinating these issues, but a strategic upgrade of UNEP into a Global Environment Agency, with stronger coordination powers and an ability to defragment the complex nature of the 100’s of multilateral environmental agreements currently in place could ensure a fit-for-purpose governance body for the Anthropocene. Together with leading experts, the program further refined and workshopped this proposal, identifying opportunities to work toward this next-generation governance.

4. Building an Earth Governance Alliance

The approach followed by the program was to develop thoughtful, high-quality proposals for sound “planetary governance” that lead to real change through the support of “smart coalitions,” i.e., coalitions of global civil society together with like-minded states and other stakeholders. This requires financial resources, critical feedback, and a place where experts, NGOs, think tanks, and government officials can meet face-to-face to build and deepen coalitions and to forge consensus on viable pathways forward, through dialogue and debate. To this end, several meetings with academics, civil society organizations, and lawyers took place at THE NEW INSTITUTE, where projects were discussed, developed, and advanced in numerous workshops. “The Institute acted as a catalyst for our work,” says Groff.

Fellows

MAJA GROFF

Convenor, Climate Governance Commission,
The Hague, The Netherlands

September 2024–June 2025

Maja Groff is an international lawyer based in The Hague, where she teaches at the Hague Academy of International Law. She serves as Convenor of the Climate Governance Commission since late 2019, and is Co-Chair of the Coordinating Committee for the International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC), as well as The Canadian Task Force Against Global Corruption. She also is Senior Treaty Advisor to Integrity Initiatives International for the development of the IACC Statute. Maja has worked on a wide range of existing and potential global treaties addressing contemporary human rights issues and cross-border legal cooperation, including the pioneering International Hague Network of Judges. She has conducted extensive liaison work with international organizations, global professional associations, and NGOs, and has played a key role in the convening of international legal expert groups for the purpose of developing new international legal norms.



Researcher, University of Kiel, Germany
September 2024–June 2025

Clara Bartram Gurresø holds a PhD in politics from Kiel University, in which she explored the criteria and procedures used to allocate international climate adaptation finance. Her research used a case study approach to understand the complexities of the allocation process from the perspective of climate finance providers. She also holds an MA in geography from the University of Edinburgh and a MSc in global development from Copenhagen University. She has been involved in the UN climate negotiations since 2014 in different capacities: as an NGO observer, delegation support for the Seychelles government, and a researcher. Among other things, she established and facilitated the interest group on climate finance for the UNFCCC’s research constituency, RINGO.



ANDREW DOSS

Founder and CEO, 3DL, New Orleans, USA
Climate Governance Commission Implementation
September 2024–March 2025

Andrew Doss is an attorney, writer, governance innovator, and strategic convener. He holds degrees in American law (J.D., Georgetown University Law Center), public international law (LLM, Leiden University), and ritual & theology (M.Div., Yale University). Andrew has served as a criminal prosecutor, policy advisor for the New Orleans Mayor and Louisiana Governor, and Director of the Resilient Louisiana Commission to guide the state’s economy through COVID-19. He is also the CEO & Founder of 3DL—Three Degree Living—a nonprofit that brings communities together to make and implement pathways for living in a hotter future. Since the 2005 Katrina disaster flooded his hometown of New Orleans, Andrew has connected local communities and global systems to prevent, respond to, and recover from catastrophe. With a focus on the intersection of governance, culture, and equity, he convenes people to collaboratively address complex challenges.



Events and Activities

28.11.24

International Environmental Court Expert Meeting

This meeting brought together leading national environmental legal practitioners and international lawyers, including representatives from the ICE Coalition and the Climate Governance Commission(CGC). They discussed the need for an International Court for the Environment and the path forward to establish the Court in the face of current geopolitical and international legal circumstances, while building on the momentum of the International Court of Justice climate case.



03–07.03.25

Expert Meeting on proposals including a Global Environment Agency (GEA)

The meeting convened leading Earth system governance experts to further refine key climate governance reform proposals, including the development of a Global Environment Agency, the Establishment of a Planetary Emergency Platform, and the proposal for an international climate policy clearinghouse/hub.



Expert Meeting on an International Court for the Environment (ICE)

07–08.04.25

The meeting brought together a wide circle of leading international environmental law experts and legal practitioners, including representatives from the ICE Coalition and the Climate Governance Commission (CGC) to discuss the possible functions and features of an international environmental court, as well as practical next steps. This discussion built on meetings held at THE NEW INSTITUTE in November 2024 and February 2025, which explored initial ideas for such an institution and synergies between the court and other reform proposals by the Commission.



09.04.25

Youth Expert and Advocate Meeting on Transforming Global Governance for the Planetary Emergency on Wednesday

The meeting brought leaders from the youth movement together with the Climate Governance Commission (CGC) and supporting partners at Mobilizing an Earth Governance Alliance (MEGA) to strategize on integrating youth perspectives in driving climate action. The goal is to build on the prior success of the youth movement (as with the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on climate and multiple youth-led climate national litigation efforts) and identify areas to work together on implementing priority proposals.

11.04.25

Private Sector Expert Meeting on Transforming Global Governance for the Planetary Emergency

The meeting brought together leaders from the progressive business movement with the Climate Governance Commission (CGC) and supporting partners at Mobilizing an Earth Governance Alliance (MEGA) to discuss and refine the prioritized governance proposals with a specific focus on integrating private sector perspectives.

01.06.25

Hamburg Sustainability Conference Pre-Event

The pre-event began with an expert roundtable co-hosted by leading scientist David Obura, Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), on the economic transformations necessary to address Earth system risks. The roundtable, which included private sector leaders, academics, and policymakers, involved a rich discussion of the importance of transforming financial and economic paradigms to ensure the recognition and restoration of natural capital, as well as some of the practical steps that could be taken to drive this transformation. Participants from a variety of expert backgrounds were able to synergistically identify potential areas for collaboration.



Following this was a closed-door workshop which included the Climate Governance Commission, THE NEW INSTITUTE's Planetary Governance Program, and international leading scientists and global governance experts and policymakers to discuss next steps for the developments of policy and governance solutions to sufficiently monitor and respond to Earth system destabilizations and risks.

In the evening, a public panel discussion and Q&A on the science and the various solutions, e.g., the enhancement of international Earth system monitoring capacity, a declaration of the UN General Assembly on novel Earth system risks, the convening of a Planetary Emergency Platform, and the establishment of a Global Climate and Nature Policy Innovation Hub, took place at THE NEW INSTITUTE.

04–05.06.25

Climate Governance Commission Meeting

Building on the bilateral conversations which have taken place in the Commission and with external partners since September 2023, the aim of the meeting was to chart the Commission's path forward. Specifically, the meeting focused on the following objectives:

- 1. To formally update the Commission on ongoing work, achievements, and consider plans for the future implementation phase of the Commission, highlighting our rapidly accelerating progress with building high-level partnerships and support for a number of key proposals, and identifying how the Commissioners can continue to support this work.
- 2. To consider our response to current trends in international affairs, building on suggestions from Commissioners/Co-Chairs.
- 3. To receive Commissioner input on a planned 10–15 page update to our 2023 Report.
- 4. To discuss the future configuration of the Commission.

The Commissioners also had an opportunity to directly engage with members of the Brazil COP30 team and identify synergies between the Commission's proposals and the COP team's proposals regarding efforts to enhance multilateral governance.



04.06.25

New Leadership for Earth System Governance: Ensuring Human Flourishing in the Anthropocene

This event engaged leading women protagonists in international law, policy, diplomacy, and politics, in a dialogue about our international predicaments and pathways out of current crises.

Moderated by THE NEW INSTITUTE Program Chair Maja Groff, panel participants included: Maria Fernanda Espinosa (Co-Chair CGC, President of the 73rd UN General Assembly, Former Ministerial roles, Ecuador, Executive Director Global Women Leaders), Thilmeeza Hussain (Commissioner, Former Permanent Representative of The Maldives to the United Nations, Director, UN Regional Commissions New York Office), and Sandrine Dixon-Declève (Commissioner, Executive Chair, Earth4All, Former Co-President, Club of Rome).

The event considered practical yet ambitious ideas to improve global climate and ecological governance, drawing attention to the need to reform major institutions, instruments, policies, laws, rules, norms, and coordination processes among different actors to better respond to the threat of the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change. There was a particular focus on the need to remain within Planetary Boundaries and avoid crossing critical Earth system tipping points. The panel established broad areas of consensus on priority global governance reform innovations, building on the landmark 2023 report by the Climate Governance Commission “Governing Our Planetary Emergency” (2023). It shared perspectives on the growing global support and diverse, powerful networks of organizations and individuals committed to growing a coalition of states and non-state actors to achieve critical global governance changes within the next one-to-three years (for near-term innovations) and three-to-five years (for medium-term “next-generation” innovations).



Miti Ruangkritya, *Untitled* (2011). Courtesy of the artist.

Futures of Capitalism: Radical Democracy and The Financial Imagination

How do the workings of financial markets shape our social reality, and how can practices of speculation and distortion become tools of radical democratic imagination?

Introduction

Finance developed within capitalism as a practical tool for managing risk. Futures trading emerged at the Chicago Board of Trade in the 19th century, allowing farmers and merchants to hedge against price volatility. Futures contracts helped turn uncertainty into something tradable and manageable—an innovation that reflects finance’s foundational role in stabilizing markets and supporting economic activity.

But over time, finance’s role evolved. Its future-making technologies—speculation, forecasting, gambling—began not just to manage risk, but to actively shape our lived realities. What started as a system to mitigate uncertainty gradually became a powerful force that constructs the future itself. As the logic of risk intensified, so did the logic of reward. The higher the risk, the higher the potential gain—and the more pronounced the economic agency—until economic behavior itself was redefined. “Homo economicus”, once a rational actor focused on efficiency and risk management, gave way to “homo speculans”, a being driven by speculation, with uncertainty not only as a challenge to overcome, but as an opportunity to exploit—even when speculating on its own survival.

That disturbing observation alone—how risk became an asset rather than a side-effect and how “homo economicus” had evolved into “homo speculans”—marked a striking twist in the history and anthropology of finance. It was an observation well worth deeper exploration, and the Futures of Capitalism program, led by Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou, pushed the discourse even further.

As a sociologist of finance, Komporozos-Athanasiou argued that finance was not merely a market tool. Rather, it has the power to create entire worlds—worlds in which assets can shift from being stabilizing forces to sources of volatility. Finance, in his view, is also a way that actors imagine and engage with their possible futures. To participate in finance is, in this case, an existential act: a way of claiming, individually or collectively, the uncertainty of what lies ahead.

Program Chair

Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou
Associate Professor of Sociology,
University College London, United Kingdom

During the Autumn Term of the academic year 2024–2025, in addition to Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou, the group included anthropologist Kimberly Chong and was often joined online by historian Jamie Pietruska and sociologist Melinda Cooper who joined the program in person at THE NEW INSTITUTE later in the academic year.

The program focused on developing a “speculation spectrum” as its main heuristic outcome. This “spectrum” viewed various financial phenomena as those of a dual nature, “flipping” between stability and volatility depending on context and cultural embeddedness. Is contributing to a pension really a safe investment and buying crypto a risky one? The answer, the fellows argued, was no: both can be either safe or risky.

As one pulls a dot—representing an established form of financial activity, such as investing in pensions—along the spectrum, one uncovers hidden sub-worlds within each. These variations are not only about material outcomes like gains or losses, but also about symbolic meaning. The more speculative an investment was, the more it could serve as a source of resilience and empowerment, especially for communities historically marginalized by mainstream financial systems. The question then arose: what was the proper way to translate these sentiments into the spectrum? On that point, Komporozos-Athanasiou worked closely with another Futures of Capitalism fellow, Till Wittwer, an artist and researcher of how “reality” is constructed. In the Winter Term, Jamie Pietruska, Till Wittwer, and a researcher of long-termism, Giulia Dal Maso, came to THE NEW INSTITUTE. By March 2025, the logics of the speculation spectrum was further refined and each fellow started working on a concrete financial mechanism —pensions, catastrophe bonds, asset management, financial tackling of long-termism —to showcase how the spectrum works.

As the work advanced, Komporozos-Athanasiou saw a way to push the discussion even further beyond a mere “worlding of finance” to explore its spill-over effects—how it impacts areas outside of its immediate domain and interacts with various crises—demographic, climate, geopolitical, and democratic. He framed it within the concept of Collapse Finance. Crucial to this framework was the idea that not only does finance notoriously profit from various systemic collapses, but it is also transformed by them in ways that can give rise to radically new financial imaginations—precisely because, as the program pointed out at the beginning, the world of finance is generative by nature.

In the Spring Term, Komporozos-Athanasiou worked with Cooper, Dal Maso, and Wittwer to test the Collapse Finance framework. In June, the Futures of Capitalism program brought together scholars, journalists, and activists at THE NEW INSTITUTE for an experimental end-of-year conversation. Curated and designed by Till Wittwer, the event featured a Collapse Finance booklet with content by Komporozos-Athanasiou, Dal Maso, and Wittwer. It also marked the launch of the Global Consortium for Rethinking Capitalism (GCRC), which will continue beyond the 2024–2025 academic year, based at the Center for Capitalism Studies at University College London. The GCRC aims to reimagine how we study markets and financial systems through global collaboration. A Collapse Finance film is currently in production and set for release in late 2025.

Fellows

ARIS KOMPOROZOS-ATHANASIOU

Associate Professor of Sociology, University College London, United Kingdom

September 2024–June 2025

Aris Komporozos-Athanasίου is an Associate Professor of Sociology at University College London and Director of the UCL Centre for Capitalism Studies. He is the author of *Speculative Communities: Living with Uncertainty in a Financialized World* (University of Chicago Press, 2022) and *Real Fake*, which will be published by MIT Press in 2026. Aris’s research traces the multifaceted impact of financial markets on everyday life and on our political imagination. His widely acclaimed theory of capitalism has developed a critical vision that connects speculation, politics, and progressive futurity in the struggle for financial justice and social solidarity. His work has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *Bookforum*, and the Locarno Film Festival, and his public writing has appeared in *The Guardian*, *Aeon*, *The Boston Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and other publications.



KIMBERLY CHONG

Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University College London, UK

Cosmologies of Value, Inequality and the Financial Imagination

September 2024–June 2025

Kimberly Chong is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at University College London. Her research explores the production of financialized capitalism through expert practices, drawing on fieldwork with management consultants, fund managers, and back-office knowledge workers. While Kimberly’s first research project focused on the commensuration of moral and economic value in the legitimization of the financialization of work, her current research considers how inequality and social difference are drawn upon and produced through practices of speculation and valuation. She draws inspiration from feminist anthropology, studies of racial capitalism, and the anthropology of finance. Kimberly’s first book, *Best Practice: Management Consulting and the Ethics of Financialization in China*, won the 2021 European Group for Organizational Studies Book Award.



MELINDA COOPER

School of Sociology, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Australia

Founder Fantasies: Private Investment Funds and the Silicon Valley Far Right

May–June 2024

Melinda Cooper is a social and political theorist who earned her Diplôme d’Études Approfondies (DEA) and Doctorate at the University of Paris VIII (Vincennes-a-St-Denis). Her most recent monograph, *Counterrevolution: Extravagance and Austerity in Public Finance* (2024), seeks to understand the countervailing influences that push governments towards permanent public spending austerity while at the same time allowing for a proliferation of monetary and fiscal backstops to private wealth. She is currently based in the School of Sociology at the Australian National University where she teaches classical social theory, feminist theory, Australian neoliberalism, and theories of populism.



Research Fellow at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy and at the National University of Singapore

Longevity Finance: The speculative search for life extension

January–March 2025

Giulia Dal Maso is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at both the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. Her research focuses on the impact of financial markets on social and political spheres. Giulia has worked extensively on the rise of financialization in post-socialist contexts, with a particular focus on China and Eastern Europe. She has also studied the development of green and sustainable finance in Chinese and broader Asian contexts. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Jacobin*, the *Journal of Cultural Economy*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Historical Materialism*, *Social and Cultural Geography*, and *Focaal*.



Associate Professor of History, Rutgers University, USA

Weather Gambling from the Gilded Age to Climate Crisis and a Primer on Capitalist Futures

January–March 2025

Jamie Pietruska is Associate Professor of History at Rutgers University. Her research focuses on technoscience and the production of knowledge in economic life. Her books, articles, and essays have explored a range of topics, including the regulation of fake weather forecasts, the long history of information economies, and imperial meteorological infrastructures. Current projects include a history of weather gambling and its relationship to finance capitalism, and a history of inquiry that explores the historical tension between data imaginaries and data practices. Jamie's work has been featured in the *Washington Post*, on NPR, and on various podcasts. She received her PhD from the Program in History, Anthropology, and STS at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has held postdoctoral fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Council of Learned Societies.



Psychoanalyst, New York, USA

Subjectivities, Symptoms and Solutions under Late Capitalism: A Clinical Psychoanalyst's Perspective

May–June 2025

Jamieson Webster is a psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City and a part-time faculty member at The New School for Social Research. She is the author, most recently, of *On Breathing* (Peninsula Press, UK; Catapult, US), as well as *Conversion Disorder: Listening to the Body in Psychoanalysis* (Columbia, 2018) and, with Simon Critchley, *Stay, Illusion! The Hamlet Doctrine* (Vintage Random House, 2013). She has written regularly for *Artforum*, *The New York Times*, and *The New York Review of Books*, as well as many psychoanalytic publications.



Artist, Writer, and Researcher, Berlin, Germany

Building Fiction (Versuch II)

January–March 2025

Till Wittwer is an artist, writer, and researcher. He creates research-based narratives exploring the ways in which "reality" is constructed. These narratives come in the form of lectures, performances, essays, publications, video, and – occasionally – games. After obtaining degrees in Theater Studies at the Free University of Berlin (FU) and Fine Arts at the University of the Arts Berlin (UdK), Till became a Research Scholar at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) where he made his first attempt to grapple with the evasiveness of finance, researching Louis Sullivan's lost Chicago Stock Exchange building and the current Chicago Board Options Exchange. This resulted in the 2-channel film "Building Fiction (Versuch I)." His work has been shown internationally, including at Kunstverein Hannover, Re:Publica, Filmfront Chicago, KOW Gallery, and the Hammer Museum Los Angeles. His writings have been widely published, he has taught at art schools and universities, and his catalogue *Fabrikanten der Wirklichkeit* was recently published by Kunstverein Hannover.



Director, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, Germany

Visitor, May–June 2025

Jens Beckert is Director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (Max Planck Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung) and Professor of Sociology at the University of Cologne. He has previously taught in Göttingen, New York, Princeton, Paris, and at Harvard University. He was awarded the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities Prize in 2005 and the Leibniz Prize of the German Research Foundation in 2018. Jens received the Karl Polanyi Prize from the German Sociological Association for his book *Imaginierte Zukunft. Fiktionale Erwartungen und kapitalistische Dynamik*.



Events and Activities

05.12.24

Will Capitalism Survive the 21st Century?

The inaugural conversation hosted by the UCL Centre for Capitalism Studies (CCS), led by Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou, examined critical challenges facing capitalism amid growing inequality and ecological crisis. Facilitated with support from THE NEW INSTITUTE, the event convened economist Thomas Piketty, political commentator Ash Sarkar, and anthropologist and journalist Gillian Tett for a rigorous debate.

Piketty offered a cautiously optimistic outlook, advocating a global wealth tax and emphasizing the state’s historic capacity to respond to systemic crises. Sarkar countered with skepticism, questioning the feasibility of coordinated global action amid resurgent nationalism and capitalism’s moral erosion. Tett provided a historical perspective, tracing neoliberalism’s decline to its neglect of market morality and highlighting the rise of cultural conservatism.



01.01.25

Kristian Bondo Hansen: “Scaling AI with fake data: The Promises and Pitfalls of Synthetic Data in Finance and Beyond”

By the time of this talk, Kristian Bondo Hansen from Copenhagen Business School had already been involved in the program’s work for some time through online meetings. Together with the fellows, he explored how synthetic data reshapes risk perception and normalizes uncertainty as a default condition of our world—albeit one that remains manageable. In this talk to the wider community of THE NEW INSTITUTE, Bondo Hansen focused on the question of “what is synthetic data?”

Synthetic data replicates the statistical properties of real data and looks identical to it. It originated in urban studies, where researchers modeled population shifts between neighborhoods in artificially closed environments. Unlike real data, synthetic data is free of noise, making it easier to process with AI. In this sense, it is a case of technology enabling technology in the pursuit of experimental purity.

But how is such data valued, evaluated, and governed? Through this question, Bondo Hansen highlighted both the transformative potential and the ethical and technical challenges of relying on artificial datasets to shape AI-driven futures.



12.02.25

Max Haiven: “The Gamed Economy and Its Discontents”

In this public lecture at THE NEW INSTITUTE, Max Haiven explored how economic life has become increasingly shaped by the logic of games—where risk, reward, and strategic behavior dominate not only financial markets but also everyday life. Drawing on his work in cultural theory and political economy, Haiven examined the consequences of a world in which finance, speculation, and algorithmic control turn workers, citizens, and consumers into players navigating rigged systems. He argued that this “gamed economy” fosters cynicism, competition, and a breakdown of solidarity, while obscuring the power structures behind inequality and ecological crisis. Haiven also reflected on the possibilities for resistance and imagination beyond the game, urging a politics rooted in collective care and creativity.



12–16.05.25

Xin Liu at THE NEW INSTITUTE

In May 2025, Xin Liu, a research fellow from the Turku Institute of Advanced Studies (TIAS), visited THE NEW INSTITUTE as a guest of the Futures of Capitalism program. During her visit, she engaged in focused discussions with Aris Komporozos-Athanasίου and Melinda Cooper on the role of lotteries in China—drawing from her research on The Lottery Nation—and exchanged ideas on program developments. Her contributions sparked fresh insights into how speculative culture and institutional innovation intersect in financial systems. The visit strengthened ties between TIAS and the Futures of Capitalism initiative and laid the groundwork for collaborative research moving forward. present generation has a responsibility to ensure that future generations have the capacity to meet their basic needs, including access to drinkable water, food, and healthcare.

22.05.25

Jens Beckert: “Valuation, Capitalism, and Imaginaries of the Future”

In his in-depth conversation with Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou and Melinda Cooper at THE NEW INSTITUTE, Jens Beckert reflected on the limits of imagined futures when confronting climate collapse. Beckert asked: what are the structural barriers within capitalist modernity that hinder meaningful action? He explored why societies fail to act despite clear climate knowledge, suggesting that loss—not hope—dominates collective outlooks. Class-based organization is broken, and populists have absorbed peoples’ grievances. Markets, Beckert argued, are essential for organizing complexity but inadequate for confronting externalities. While he doubted the feasibility of post-growth capitalism, he called for fresh thinking around redistribution, valuation, and political will in navigating the transition to sustainable futures. His point of hope was the idea that perhaps progressive imaginaries could emerge amid stagnation and inequality.



10–11.06.25

“Collapse Finance”, the inaugural workshop of the Global Consortium for Re-thinking Capitalism (GCRC)

At THE NEW INSTITUTE, the Collapse Finance workshop—a major international convention—brought together high impact participants to ask: what happens to finance in a collapsing world? Sessions traced how markets run on imagined futures—fictional expectations shaped by power, not care. Climate risk gets priced but rarely prevented. AI systems, seen as objective, often deepen inequality. They classify, exclude, and obscure. Finance also reshapes politics—turning public needs into private risk. Even life itself is financialized, turned into speculative capital. A new figure emerged: no longer “homo economicus” but “homo speculans”—a person who navigates crisis from below, betting on unstable futures. Participants questioned whether grassroots finance—mutual aid, crypto, informal economies—can break free from the system’s grip. Or does it just mimic its logic? Rather than close off possibilities, collapse became a lens. A moment to rethink value, risk, and solidarity. Not to fix finance—but to ask what comes next.



11.06.25

Gillian Tett: “The Future of Finance: The Three “Ds” Reshaping Money”

In the keynote closing the Collapse Finance workshop, the former Chair of the FT Editorial Board and co-founder of Moral Money, Gillian Tett explored how deregulation, de-dollarization, and digitalization are radically reshaping global finance. Framing this transformation as an inflection point, she examined not just economic trends but deeper cultural and institutional shifts in the meaning and function of money. Tett also reflected on the etymology of such terms as “finance” and “company”, reminding us that these concepts originated in ideas of mutual obligation and shared purpose. Drawing on her anthropological background, she offered insights into the secular structure of trust in Japan, where informal mechanisms are often substituted for formal regulation—until each crisis erodes them further. These reflections underscored how trust in financial systems is historically contingent and structurally fragile. Ultimately, the keynote called for rethinking finance not just as a technical system, but as a social and political project, shaped by collective beliefs and vulnerable to collapse—yet also open to reinvention.



18.06.25

“On Breathing and Collapse: Book Discussion with Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou and Jamieson Webster”

This public conversation at THE NEW INSTITUTE featured Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou and psychoanalyst Jamieson Webster discussing her recent book *On Breathing*. Framing the discussion were themes of collapse—ecological, social, and psychic—and the ways in which breath figures as both a physical act and a political metaphor. Webster reflected on how breath becomes regulated, pathologized, or reclaimed in times of crisis, while Komporozos-Athanasiou brought in insights from his forthcoming book *Real Fake* to explore how fantasy and disorganization shape collective responses to breakdown. Together, they considered how breathing opens a space for refusal, affective resistance, and alternative forms of relationality under neoliberal collapse.





Simon Menner, *Camouflage, Sniper on top of the two big boulders in the lower right corner. Muzzle is visible* (2019). Courtesy of the artist.

Bitter Victory

Is Victory Possible in the 21st Century?

Introduction

Terror, violence, and wars persist relentlessly, affecting every corner of our planet. Civil and civic, socio-political, economic, scientific, and cultural discourses are contaminated by the pervasive presence of militant rhetoric and warrior-like language. In the Bitter Victory program, the fellows dissected and compared the evolution of victory doctrines and explored their implications on the termination of violence and establishment of peace.

Democracy legitimizes itself by recognizing and respecting those fairly defeated in elections, in the fair exchange of ideas, and the fair competition of market economies. However, there is a growing public perception of political opponents as “absolute enemies” who must be defeated at all costs, posing a threat to democracy. The program’s critical analysis of “winning at all costs” was not just a scholarly pursuit but a crucial step towards defending the integrity of Western democracies by reconstructing its principles of victory, understanding future global conflicts, and promoting peace.

The analysis of the meaning of “victory” also extends beyond democratic societies to include armed groups and states that lack a democratic tradition. Here the focus of the Bitter Victory program was on redefining the principle of “victory” within the strategies and ethics of warfare of these non-democratic entities as they engage in warfare or develop geostrategic ambitions. Understanding their perspective on victory is a theoretical exercise and a necessary step towards comprehensively understanding future global conflicts. In the near future, in addition to Russia and Israel, China will also become a central topic in discussions about winning and victory.

Program Chair

Petar Bojanić
Principal Research Fellow,
University of Belgrade, Serbia

Fellows

PETAR BOJANIĆ

Principal Research Fellow, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Program Chair
September–December 2024

Petar Bojanić is Principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory of the University of Belgrade. He is also a founding Director of the Center for Advanced Studies Southeast Europe, University of Rijeka, and President of the Institute for Democratic Engagement Southeast Europe in Belgrade.



SANJA BOJANIĆ

Executive Director, Center for Advanced Studies Southeast Europe, University of Rijeka, Croatia
The Affective Burden of Victory
September 2024–June 2025

Sanja Bojanić is engaged in the philosophy of culture, focusing on contemporary gender, racial, and class issues that intensify social and affective inequalities. Her interdisciplinary research bridges experimental artistic practices, queer studies, and affect theory. She has held positions at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, the Nouvel Observateur, and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris Nord). Currently Executive Director of the Center for Advanced Studies Southeast Europe at the University of Rijeka, she also teaches Semiotics, New Media Theories, and Visual Methodologies at its Academy of Applied Arts. Her extensive research projects have been supported by the EU Commission, the Volkswagen Foundation, and UNESCO. She is the author of several books and over forty peer-reviewed papers.



ARSENIY KUMANKOV

Princeton University, USA
Victory Narratives in Eastern European Thought
September–December 2024

Arseniy Kumankov specializes in war studies, ethics of war and peace, and political and social theory. He has been a research scholar in politics at Princeton since 2022. In 2024, he taught courses on Russian politics and political theory at UMass Amherst. Arseniy received his PhD in philosophy from HSE University (Moscow) in 2014. Between 2013 and 2022, he taught at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Shaninka) and at HSE University, where he was deputy dean for research at the Faculty of Humanities and associate professor. Arseniy has authored numerous articles in Russian and English, as well as three books in Russian, and is the editor of the book series of the New Literary Observer (NLO) publishing house. Arseniy is a member of EuroISME, Concerned Philosophers for Peace, and the Independent Institute of Philosophy.



Associate Professor, Simon Fraser University,
Burnaby, Canada

Ethos of Victory: Vertical Occupation

September–December 2024

Svitlana Matviyenko is an Associate Professor of Critical Media Analysis in the School of Communication and Associate Director of the Digital Democracies Institute at Simon Fraser University. Her research and teaching, informed by science & technology studies and the history of science, are focused on information and cyberwar, media and environment, critical infrastructure studies, and postcolonial theory. Svitlana’s current work on nuclear cultures and heritage investigates the practices of nuclear terror, weaponization of pollution, and technogenic catastrophes during the Russian war in Ukraine. At the Digital Democracies Institute, Svitlana leads Cyberwar Topologies and Media, Infrastructure, Environment research streams. She also serves on the Advisory Board of the Critical Infrastructure Lab at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



Associate Professor of Sociology, Zhejiang
University, Hangzhou, China

Daodejing and Chinese Understanding of
Victory

September 2024–March 2025

Yanfei Sun is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Zhejiang University. She holds a PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago and has been a Mellon Research Fellow at Columbia University, a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, a visiting associate professor at Harvard, and a lecturer at the University of Chicago. Her research focuses on the sociology of religion and political sociology, examining religious change, movements, toleration, secularism, and nationalism, as well as the historical-comparative study of empires and nation-states. Her work has appeared in *American Journal of Sociology*, *Theory and Society*, *Modern China*, and leading Chinese journals. Yanfei’s 2017 article in the *American Journal of Sociology* and her 2019 article on “Theory and Society” received the Distinguished Article Award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in 2018 and 2020 respectively.



Events and Activities

04.12.24

Panel Discussion: What Kind of Victory is Possible in the 21st Century?

In the modern era, neither superpowers nor insurgent groups seem capable of securing decisive victories. Battlefield triumphs turn into endless conflicts, leaving wars that outlast generations. THE NEW INSTITUTE fellow Sanja Bojanić moderated a lively discussion around the questions “how can wars in the 21st century truly end?”, “what defines military success, and “what does claiming victory in modern warfare mean?”

The panel discussion explored the evolving concept of victory and the different dimensions of winning, ending a conflict, and obtaining peace and security.

Panelists were Beatrice Heuser (University of Glasgow), Argyro Kartsonaki and Cornelius Friesendorf (both from the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, University of Hamburg), and Maja Groff (THE NEW INSTITUTE).

Individual Fellows

THE NEW INSTITUTE offers individual fellowships for scholars and practitioners from academia, politics, business, the arts, media, and journalism who are working on concrete, socially relevant projects related to our research areas and who are interested in collaborative work. They actively participate in the Institute’s events, including the weekly collaborative formats, as well as occasional lectures or lunch talks, and contribute to cross-program discussions. As such, they are an integral part of our community and support interdisciplinary exchange.

ZEYNEP ALEMDAR

Director of the Foreign Policy Program, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, Istanbul, Turkey

Academic Freedom in Turkey

September 2024–June 2025

Zeynep Alemdar is a Professor of International Relations and Political Science and Director of the Foreign Policy Program at the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM). Her research spans gender and international security, democratization, human rights, citizenship, Turkey-EU relations, and Turkish foreign policy. She previously taught international politics, served as department head and dean at a foundation university in Istanbul, and was a visiting professor at Portland State University. Zeynep founded the Women in Foreign Policy Initiative and serves on the board of the European Leadership Network. Named one of four leaders under 40 in Euro-Atlantic security in 2014, she spent her sabbatical at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.



FRITZ BREITHAUP

Provost Professor of Cognitive Science and Germanic Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA

The Role of Narratives in Polarization and Depolarization Communication

September/November 2023, May–June 2024, September–November 2024, January–June 2025

Fritz Breithaupt is a Professor of Germanic Studies and Cognitive Science at Indiana University, where he became one of the youngest to receive the title of Provost Professor in 2017. He earned his PhD in German literature from Johns Hopkins University and has been a Fulbright and Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, as well as a Visiting Professor at St. Gallen University. At Indiana, he leads the Experimental Humanities Lab, bridging the sciences and humanities, and develops courses in cognitive arts. His books have been published by Suhrkamp since 2009, and his latest, *The Narrative Brain*, won Wissenschaftsbuch des Jahres 2023 in Austria. His research spans German and European culture, cognitive humanities, and the history of psychology.



DANIEL HALLIDAY

Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Melbourne, Australia
The Future of Capitalism
September 2024–June 2025

Daniel Halliday is an Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of Melbourne. He obtained his PhD in Philosophy from Stanford University in 2011. Daniel specializes in political philosophy, with a particular focus on markets and various aspects of economic justice. He is the author of the books *The Ethics of Capitalism* (2020), co-authored with John Thrasher, and *The Inheritance of Wealth: Justice, Equality, and The Right to Bequeath* (2018), both published by Oxford University Press. He is currently working on a book exploring the morality of credit markets and related issues, with Marco Meyer, along with various papers focusing on topics to do with population aging and labor markets.



PAUL KOTTMAN

Professor of Comparative Literature, The New School for Social Research, New York, USA
Democratic Ethics and Aesthetics
September 2024–June 2025

Paul Kottman is a Professor of Comparative Literature and Chair of Liberal Studies at the New School for Social Research in New York. He edits the book series Square One: First Order Questions in the Humanities for Stanford University Press and is the author of several books. Most recently, *Love as Human Freedom* sees love as a practice that changes over time through which new social realities are brought into being. Love brings about, and helps us to explain, immense social-historical shifts—from the rise of feminism to the struggles for abortion rights and birth control and the erosion of a gender-based division of labor. He is currently at work on a book that interrogates the way in which ethical life takes shape in contemporary aesthetic forms.



SUSAN LAMB

International Lawyer, Lisbon, Portugal
Governing the Global Commons: The UN Security Council’s Management of Complex and Interconnected Threats to International Peace and Security
May 2024–March 2025

Susan Lamb is an international lawyer based in Lisbon and admitted to practice in New Zealand. A former Crown Counsel in New Zealand’s Crown Law Office and justice of the Belize Supreme Court, she serves on the Coordinating Committee for International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC) and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIARB). She has held senior roles at UN international criminal tribunals, including Senior Judicial Coordinator at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, Chef de Cabinet at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and Appeals Counsel at the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. She holds degrees from Otago University in law and international relations, and undertook doctoral studies at Oxford University focused on the scope of the UN Security Council’s enforcement powers.



MARTIN MULSOW

Professor of Intellectual History, University of Erfurt, Germany
Wahrheit: Eine Tiefengeschichte
September 2024–June 2025

Martin Mulsow is a Professor of Intellectual History at the University of Erfurt and Director of the Gotha Research Center. He studied philosophy in Tübingen, Berlin, and Munich. From 2005 to 2008 he was Professor of History at Rutgers University, USA. He is a member of several German academies and has been a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, and the NIAS in Amsterdam. His work on Renaissance philosophy, the history of early modern science, and the Radical Enlightenment has received numerous awards, including the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities Prize and the Anna Krüger Prize. Martin is interested in painting, traveling, and foreign cultures. He is currently working on a deep history of truth and on how intellectual history (and especially the history of the Enlightenment) is affected by the climate crisis.



BERNHARD PÖRKSEN

Professor of Media Studies, University of Tübingen, Germany

Taking the Long View in Journalism: How to Make Information Matter

September 2024–March 2025

Bernhard Pörksen is a Professor of Media Studies at the University of Tübingen. His research focuses on the mechanisms, dynamics, and conflicts of media communication and public discourse. Bernhard has written or co-authored books on topics such as communication theory, journalism education, cybernetics, systemic thinking, and constructivist epistemology. His current research projects and areas of interest are: the dynamics of outrage in the digital age – developing a framework to study how scandals are reshaped in a networked world; 2) media literacy for the digital age –linking the principles of quality journalism to a practical ethics of communication for a future “editorial society”; and 3) public conflict dynamics – applying communication psychology to de-escalate discourse across social levels.



FELIX ROHRBECK

Journalist, co-founder and editor-in-chief of Flip

Media Fellow

January–June 2025

Felix Rohrbeck is a graduate economist and communications expert. As a business journalist, he has received many awards for his investigative research, elaborate reporting, and cross-media stories. Between 2014 and 2019, he edited the economics desk at DIE ZEIT, the largest weekly newspaper in Germany. In this capacity he was involved in exposing the “cum-ex” scandal, the biggest tax robbery in Europe. In 2020 Felix co-founded the media-startup Flip. He was a Thomas Mann House Fellow in 2023.



FRANCISCO SAGASTI

The Twilight of Bacons Epoch and the Prospects for Humanity

Professor Universidad del Pacifico, Lima, Peru

May–June 2025

Francisco Sagasti is a professor at the Pacifico Business School in Lima, Peru, and a senior affiliated researcher at the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. He has served as President of Peru, a congressman, head of his parliamentary caucus, and chairman of the Science and Technology Committee. Previously, he was a fellow at the Wilson Center, executive director of FORO Nacional Internacional, chief of strategic planning at the World Bank, and chairman of the United Nations Advisory Committee on Science and Technology. He has been a visiting professor at the Wharton School, the Instituto de Empresa, and the University for Peace, and a consultant to numerous international organizations. Founder and former Executive Director of GRADE, a leading Peruvian think tank, Francisco has published extensively, with over 200 articles and 30 books. His awards include the Paul Hoffmann Prize, the Robert K. Merton Prize, and the Edgardo Habich Prize.



MINNA SALAMI

Writer, Journalist, Speaker

November 2022–June 2025

Minna Salami is a Nigerian-Finnish-Swedish feminist author and social critic whose work delves into the politics of knowledge production, the progression of feminist theory, and contemporary African thought. Her acclaimed debut, *Sensuous Knowledge* (2020), has been translated into several languages, and her new book, *Can Feminism Be African?* (HarperCollins, 2025), has just been published. She is the founder of the award-winning blog *MsAfropolitan* and a frequent speaker at institutions such as the UN, Oxford, Cambridge, Yale, and NASA’s Singularity University. Minna is a Full Member of the Club of Rome, a BMW Foundation Responsible Leader, and serves on several boards, including The Royal Institute of Philosophy and The African Feminist Initiative at Penn State. She has also advised governments on race and gender equality and curated events at London’s V&A Museum.



Yehudit and Yehuda Elkana Fellowship Program

In addition to our fellowship program, THE NEW INSTITUTE has cooperated with the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin since 2022 to host the Yehudit and Yehuda Elkana Fellowship Program. This program offers fellowships to scholars who have made outstanding contributions to the free exchange of knowledge and have opened spaces for academic controversy in times of deteriorating academic freedom. The Fellowship is tied to financial support up to 50,000 Euros for individual projects that aim to preserve free scientific exchange. We are proud to present their individual projects in the text below.

Fellows Academic Year 2024-25

JOANNA KAROLINA MALINOWSKA

Assistant Professor, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Frontline Voices: Complex Pathways of Racialization at the Polish-Belarusian Border and Their Impact on the Development of Health Inequities

January–June 2025

Joanna Karolina Malinowska is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Her work lies at the intersection of philosophy of science, ontology, epistemology, and ethics, with a focus on how concepts such as race and ethnicity are understood in scientific contexts. From 2021 to 2024, she led a project on the use of ethnoracial categories in biomedical research and health care, funded by the Polish National Science Centre. Since 2024, she has been part of a research group studying contemporary approaches to human remains, supported by the Constructive Advanced Thinking program of NetIAS. Joanna is currently working on the issue of conceptualizing whiteness in research on health inequities, particularly in relation to racialization of Eastern Europeans and among Central and Eastern European communities.



Project: Frontline Voices: Complex Pathways of Racialization at the Polish-Belarusian Border and Their Impact on the Development of Health Inequities

The project investigates the health consequences of racialized border governance at the Polish- Belarusian frontier—one of the most politically charged and under-documented regions of the European Union. It aims to examine how intersecting processes of racialization, militarization, and institutional neglect affect both people on the move (migrants from various racialized groups) and residents (activists, healthcare professionals etc.) in Poland’s eastern periphery.

By adopting an ecosocial perspective on health—as shaped not only by biological, but also by environmental, social and structural factors—the project builds on recent advances in epidemiology, critical public health, bioethics, and border studies. It adjusts frameworks constructed for analyzing racism as a social/structural determinant of health in the US context to the complex ethnoracial relations and hierarchies in Europe (with particular emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe). The project also contributes to contemporary debates on epistemic injustice, documenting how certain forms of ethnoracial discrimination and suffering are rendered invisible, illegible, or systematically ignored in national and EU-level discourse.

The project’s primary output will be a feature-length documentary film, produced in close collaboration with activists, medical workers, and residents. The film will be structured around first-person testimonies and on-site documentation, and will prioritize reliability and dignity. The project’s impact will extend beyond traditional research outputs—reaching broader audiences through film, preserving fragile testimonies, and enabling transnational dialogue around racialized violence, health, and care.

The project is designed to produce meaningful outcomes across three dimensions: public engagement, academic contribution, and long-term documentation. First, it advances theoretical frameworks for understanding racism and health beyond traditional U.S.-centric models. While much global health research continues to conceptualize racism primarily through a binary opposition between people racialized as white and non-white, this project foregrounds a more nuanced and transnational approach, analyzing how processes of racialization operate through geopolitical marginality, legal status, religion and class, and other intersecting factors. Second, it reclaims critical knowledge production under conditions of repression. In a political context where academic freedom is increasingly constrained,

the project demonstrates that situated, community-accountable research is not only possible but necessary. Its methodology—combining testimonial research, participatory ethics, and visual counter-narratives—challenges both the epistemic silencing of humanitarian crises and the depoliticization of racial health inequities.

The project aligns closely with the founding principles of the Yehudi and Yehuda Elkana Fellowship: to support scholars who take risks in politically repressive environments, challenge conventional thinking, and pursue uncomfortable truths. It will leave a concrete legacy of ethical intervention and public truth-telling.

Academic Year 2023-24

ESENGÜL AYYILDIZ

Co-Founder Aramızda Association for Gender Research

September 2023–March 2024

Esengül Ayyıldız is the co-founder of the Aramızda Association for Gender Research, a solidarity academy founded by female scholars to advance gender studies and equality. Her work also explores memory politics and cultural production related to state violence. In 2020, she coordinated the project Dersim 1937–38: Mapping the Sites of Massacres and Mass Graves in Turkey, supported by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. In 2017, Esengül, like many of her colleagues, fell victim to an emergency decree that banned her from state employment because she signed the peace petition against inhumane violence conducted by the Turkish State in the Kurdish region. After nearly seven years, she got her academic position back and is continuing her academic work as Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Communication in Çukurova University.



Project: Global Authoritarianism and Anti-Gender Politics in Europe

ARAMIZDA (In Between) Association for Gender Research was founded in 2017. Its headquarters is in Ankara. It has 83 members living in different provinces of Turkey. The members consist of academics, researchers, and graduate students working on gender studies and queer studies who have been suspended from universities as a result of political pressure and unlawful interventions. In 2019, due to the current political climate in Turkey, the field of gender studies came under pressure and gender courses were closed in many universities and centers.

In this authoritarian climate, the founding aim of the association is to open a feminist space in the field of gender studies outside the academy, but with an intersectional network in academic production, civil society, politics, and art. It shares the knowledge it has gained in the field of gender studies with civil society organizations and initiatives that struggle in this field, by publishing reports, interviews, and podcast series, and participates in various local and national networks.

One of the current projects is “Defending, Making Visible, Empowering Gender Studies in Academia”. To combat anti-gender attitudes, it creates mechanisms to empower researchers, academics, and students. It also aims to build a network to bring researchers or students working in universities and NGOs together, to provide the necessary collaborations and to form working groups to focus on specific problem areas.

FERENC HAMMER

Associate Professor, Department of Media and Communication, Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, Hungary

September 2023–March 2024

Ferenc Hammer currently was on a sabbatical leave from his position at ELTE Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. His present research and policy initiative is dedicated to addressing certain dimensions of silencing, self-censorship, and intimidation in academia. This approach involves implementing a mentoring system designed for scholars at risk. A crucial objective of this initiative is to introduce and implement an information technology-based communication system into the academic publication process. This system aims to protect scholars facing risks in their academic pursuits.

Project: Mesh – A Distance Support Scheme for Scholars at Risk

With the help of his Elkana budget, Ferenc Hammer founded MESH – Academia without borders, an initiative dedicated to supporting academics who face restrictions on their research, teaching, and expression while remaining in their home countries. MESH aims to create meaningful connections across borders to ensure that no scholar must work in isolation. It aims to do so by providing secure mentoring networks where at-risk scholars connect with international academic partners through secure communication channels. MESH is also working on an anonymous publishing system, where scholars at risk can publish their work internationally without the risk of retaliation in their home countries. MESH’s blockchain-based publishing system allows these scholars to anonymously submit their work for peer review and publication, without revealing their identities. This protects them from potential consequences.



Academic Year 2022-23

IRYNA KASH TALIAN

Scientific Researcher, Buchenwald Memorial
Weimar

April–September 2023

Iryna Kashtalian received her bachelor’s degree in history at the Belarusian State University in Minsk, her master’s degree in political science at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, and then studied at the Institute for Eastern European Studies at the Free University of Berlin for her PhD. She was a member of the Non-State Archive for Modern History and a research associate at the Belarusian Scientific Research Center for Electronic Documentation, both located in Minsk. Together with her team, she created the Belarusian Oral History Archive, and she was the head of the Historical Workshop Leonid Levin in Minsk. Before joining THE NEW INSTITUTE, Iryna was a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of European Studies at the University of Bremen. Since November 2023, Iryna is a scientific researcher at the Buchenwald Memorial where she prepares a new permanent exhibition about Soviet Camp 2 (1945–1950).



Project: The Future of Historical Research in Belarus: Developing Mechanisms for Preservation and Development

The project was launched in collaboration with the Institute for Policy Research “Political Sphere” and the Belarusian Institute of Public History. As historical research in Belarus is in crisis due to the authoritarian regime’s desire to manipulate the past, to instrumentalize history for ideological purposes and to establish complete control over academic science and scholars, the project’s objective is to develop mechanisms to support historical research in Belarus, and to preserve and develop the community of Belarusian historians outside Belarus.

The project focuses on exploring the perspectives of Belarusian historians through an oral history approach and an analysis of historical papers published over the last 10–15 years, aiming to identify positive scenarios for the future of historical studies and the community of historians in Belarus.

Repressive pressures increased after the defeat of the 2020 protests. Many Belarusian historians faced increasing risks, and numerous scholars were forced to leave the country due to threats linked to their professional activities and political views. The manipulation of history for ideological purposes, publication bans, and censorship severely obstruct the development of historical science within the country.

Historians who emigrated encountered new challenges abroad: adapting to foreign academic environments, maintaining professional activities, and continuing research on Belarusian history, which is not always a priority. In response, initiatives like the Belarusian Institute of Public History were created to support and promote Belarusian historical topics outside Belarus.

The project’s primary goal was to assist the historian community in addressing these challenges, building a common vision, and suggesting potential solutions. Initially, it analyzed the current state of historical research on Belarusian topics and examined the situation of historians from Belarus in exile. Two studies were conducted: a review of Belarusian historical publications, books, and dissertations from the last 20 years. This analysis highlights development trends and offers comparisons with other academic fields. Subsequent research focused on the forced emigration of historians and the evaluation of international support programs. These studies revealed specific migration patterns, available forms of support, and long-term challenges faced by historians abroad. Additionally, a series of interviews with historians was conducted, featuring biographical and thematic sections. These interviews provided insights

into historians’ views on the future of historical science, education, the academic community, and the effectiveness of support structures for scholars in exile.

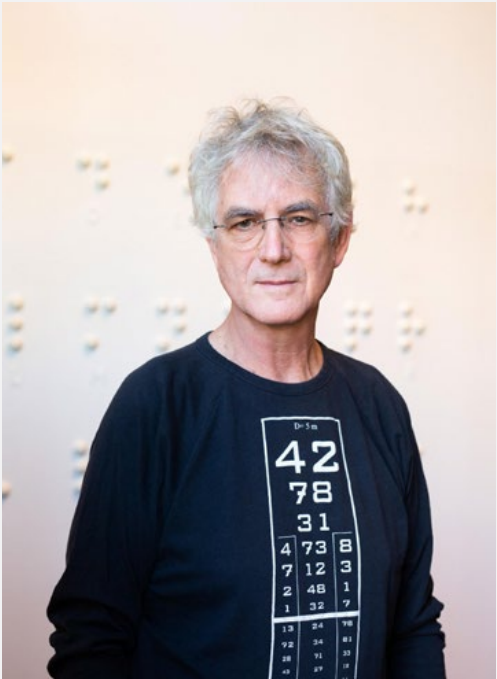
The collected materials serve to analyze the state of historical science on Belarusian topics and are the basis for developing recommendations on how to overcome the current crisis in research, which has significantly deepened after 2020. The project team is currently preparing a policy paper summarizing the research findings and recommendations.

Additionally, several events in September 2024 and March 2025 were organized involving historians, experts, academic institution representatives, and other stakeholders. Participants discussed how to maintain independent historical research and counter the instrumentalization of Belarusian history. The project team also produced a series of educational video programs for the “Complex History” YouTube channel, aiming to popularize Belarusian historical knowledge and address current issues in an accessible format.

The final output of the project will be an analytical note (policy paper) providing recommendations for stakeholders, social and political organizations, and potential donors. Its overarching goal is to preserve, support, and foster the further development of Belarusian historical scholarship and the community of historians under the new conditions.

Freeszfe Society, Budapest
October 2022–June 2023

László Upor is a dramaturg, literary translator, essayist, and university professor. He specializes in contemporary drama and performing arts. He has worked both with mainstream companies and with a great number of independent artists, in physical and puppet theaters. He has published three books and numerous articles on theater, film, and contemporary circus. His translations include novels, non-fiction, and over fifty stage plays. He is former Vice Rector/ Acting Rector of University of Theater and Film Arts (SzFE) in Budapest where he taught for over three decades. His third book is a personal account of the SzFE / Freeszfe autonomy fight.



Project: Freeszfe Society: Further Development into a Transnational, Transcultural Institution

Laslo Upor is a founding member of Freeszfe Society, formed by students and faculty who left SzFE after a long battle with the Hungarian government in 2021. He used his Elkana Grant to further address social issues through the work of the Freeszfe Society.

In November 2024, the Freeszfe Society organized an International Conference on Art and Activism in Budapest, which explored the dynamic and multifaceted relationship between politics and theater, with a central focus on how art functions within, responds to, and shapes societal and political realities. It emphasized the idea that theater is not merely a reflection of the world but an active participant in its transformation. Discussions highlighted the role of art as a vehicle for political engagement, social critique, and public discourse.

A key theme was the power of artistic expression to challenge dominant systems and foster dialogue. The notion of participatory and community-based art emerged as a critical tool for addressing social issues, enabling artists to engage directly with public spaces and marginalized communities. These forms of art were shown to spark civic awareness, encourage activism, and influence cultural perceptions.

The conference also examined the responsibilities that artists carry in public life, balancing personal expression with societal expectations. Exhibitions, performances, and archives were discussed as powerful mediums for political commentary, capable of uncovering suppressed histories and generating new forms of social engagement.

Another important focus was the aesthetics and strategies of protest within artistic practice. The sessions delved into how creative methods can mobilize communities, transform spectators into participants, and document resistance as both an artistic and historical act. Art was portrayed as a vital form of resistance, capable of energizing movements, preserving their legacies, and continuously questioning the status quo.

Overall, the conference reinforced the view that political theater and socially engaged art are essential tools in the pursuit of equity, visibility, and systemic change, positioning artists as storytellers and agents of transformation.

Additionally, Freeszfe Society presented a project at the 2024 Budapest Spring Festival titled “The Island of Peace: A Grandiose Artistic Experiment,” and involved more than 100

artists, visual designers, film and theater directors, cinematographers, and musicians.

The Elkana Grant also allowed Freeszfe Society to support a student’s graduate film production “Stars of Little Importance,” which explored the question of what comes next when one is no longer a child but has yet to become an adult. With its Hungarian and international partners, Freeszfe Society continues to work on creating an independent transnational collective by administering, mentoring, and, with its limited resources, financing three independent theatre projects by young emerging artists exploring burning topics of social and global issues.

3.

OUTPUT

Through its fellowship program, THE NEW INSTITUTE supports research and publications by individuals and fellow groups. In addition to academic and journalistic publications as our primary output, we also support other kinds of public interventions, such as interviews, podcasts, public readings, and artistic practices. In the following, we list the publications that were produced, either in part or in full, during our fellows' tenure at THE NEW INSTITUTE, as indicated by them. Publications by our 2024–25 cohort are still being finalized and we will list them on our website once they are published.



Institutional Publications

Our series THE NEW publishes collaborative research in the humanities and social sciences. The second book in this series, *Seeds for Democratic Futures*, was published in November 2024. The 17 essays in *Seeds* were written by former fellows at THE NEW INSTITUTE and investigate potentials for democratizing democracies. From finding faith to reclaiming the commons, each essay aims to plant a seed, which carries the promise of democratic potential. Dealing with topics like planetary change, AI, and plural knowledge systems, the book acts as an inspiration, calling for unorthodox, compassionate, and experimental approaches.

A German edition of *Seeds for Democratic Futures* is forthcoming in Autumn 2025, as is the third volume in the series THE NEW, which will address the 2024–2025 annual theme of Re-thinking Capitalism.

The goal of the series is to make humanistic research relevant and accessible to wider audiences, and to that end all of our publications are available as Open Access publications through our publisher transcript.

Academic Publications

JOURNAL ARTICLES

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Azam-Ali, Sayed, Gregory, Peter J. & Jahanshiri, Ebrahim (2024). ‘Diversifying the UK Agrifood System: A Role for Neglected and Underutilised Crops’, *Agronomy*, 14(4), Article 853. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agronomy14040853>

Suhairi, Tengku & **Azam-Ali, Sayed**, et al. (2024). ‘Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) Imagery in Phenotyping of Bambara Groundnut’, *Journal of Agricultural Science*, 12(6), pp. 1–12.

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Canfield, Matthew & **Duncan, Jessica**, et al. (2025). ‘Why food systems governance must be grounded in human rights’, *Nature Food*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-025-01217-9>

Esau, Katharina, et al. (2024). ‘Destructive polarization in digital communication contexts: A critical review and conceptual framework’, *Information, Communication & Society*.

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Zhang, Xudong (forthcoming). ‘Criticism and the Flow of All Things—Historicizing Jameson’s Method in Brecht and Method’, in Tally, Robert et al. (eds), *Fredric Jameson: The Future of Totality*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Zwitter, Andrej (ed.) (2026, forthcoming). *Conceptions of Human Flourishing: Well-Being in Different Cultures and Disciplines*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.



CONFERENCES, LECTURES, AND TALKS

Outreach

Belle, Kathryn (2024). 'Author Conversation: "Beauvoir and Belle: A Black Feminist Critique of The Second Sex" (International Simone de Beauvoir Society; The Beauvoir Webinar Series)', May. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwiyOT_-ULc&t=351s

Belle, Kathryn (2024). 'Interview with Kenya McGuire Johnson for Finding Your Voice After 40 Podcast', March. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=sgaJDhbIgsM&feature=youtu.be>

Brüggemann, Michael, Esau, Katharina, Meyer, Hendrik, Farjam, Mike, and Bruns, André (2024). 'Polarised Media Framing of Climate Protests: A Comparative Mixed-Methods Analysis of Australia and Germany', Annual International Communication Association (ICA) Conference, June 20–24, Gold Coast.

Durand, Cédric (2025). Interview with Alternatives Économiques: "L'alliance entre les grands patrons de la tech et Trump se confirme." June. <https://www.alternatives-economiques.fr/cedric-durand-lalliance-grands-patrons-de-tech-trump-conf/00115133>

Gelovani, Shota, Wessler, Hartmut, Meyer, Hendrik, Pröschel, Luisa, et al. (2025). 'Enhancing Democratic Listening in Online Discussions: The Role of Reaction Buttons, Discussion Moderation, and Large Language Models', conference presentation at the 75th Annual ICA Conference, Denver, USA, June 21.

Gruber, Stefan (2024). 'Commoning Tbilisi', event held October 4, Tbilisi, Georgia; chair and moderator along with Tinatin Gurgenzidze.

Gruber, Stefan (2024). 'School of Survival Vision workshop "Society of Tomorrow"', part of the exhibition *Survival in the 21st Century*, curated by Georg Diez and Nicolaus Schafhausen, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg.

Gruber, Stefan (2025). 'Commons-Public-Partnerships: Reframing Just Transition in Urbanism', paper accepted for 113th Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), New Orleans, March 20–22.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo (2024). ‘Beyond Protest: Anti-Apartheid Writing and Visual Art’, Guest Lecture, Global Literatures in Literature series, chaired by Prof. Dr. Mark Stein, University of Münster, January 25.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo (2024). ‘Not Seams but Hinges: Two Notes’, Paper presented at Looking Back to the Future: Reflecting on Apartheid 30 Years Later conference, Stellenbosch University, May 25.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo (2024). ‘Sexual Violence, Language and Imagined Feminist Friendship’, Centre Launch Public Lecture, Exeter Centre for Research in Africa, University of Exeter, June 5.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo (2024). ‘Unsettling Memories, Trauma and Gabrielle Goliath’s Imaginative Provocations’, Keynote Address, Unsettled: The 37th Annual Conference of South African Visual Art Historians, Nelson Mandela University, September 12–14.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo (2024). ‘Remembering Masha Amin, Patriarchy’s Trifecta and the Manufacture of Female Fear’, Women, Life, Freedom: International Feminist Reflections, online event, September 20.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo (2024). ‘A Stubborn Feminist Imagination in a Sequence of Crises’, Presentation at Series on Provocative Conversations in the Wake of Apartheid and Catastrophe, Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, University of Johannesburg, October 3.

Hammer, Ferenc (2024). ‘Interview with Prof. Ferenc Hammer on Academic Freedom and Supporting Silenced Scholars’, Science Media Hub, October 2, 2024. <https://sciencemediahub.eu/2024/10/02/interview-with-prof-ferenc-hammer-on-academic-freedom-and-supporting-silenced-scholars/>

Hammer, Ferenc (2024). ‘Ferenc Hammer: We Already Live on Mars, We Just Don’t Know It Yet’, 24.hu, March 26. <https://24.hu/belfold/2024/03/26/ferenc-hammer-living-on-mars-elte-lopunk/>

Hernandez, Ariel (2024). ‘Klimagerechtigkeit nach 2030: Wege zu nachhaltigen und klimaresilienten Zukünften’, UDE4future Ringvorlesung, Universität Duisburg-Essen, May 23.

Hoffman, Wakanyi (2024). ‘African Intelligence vs. Artificial Intelligence: Decoding the Ethical Framework of Ubuntu Principles to Humanize AI for Inclusive AI Cultures’, Sustainable AI Lab Workshop, University of Bonn, May 22–24.

Hoffman, Wakanyi (2024). ‘AI Alterlife’, dialogue with filmmaker Fatou Kande, HKW Berlin, May 24–26.

Ipadeola, Abosede (2024). Panel discussion: ‘Intercultural Feminist Philosophy’, World Congress of Philosophy, Rome, Italy, August 3.

Ipadeola, Abosede (2024). Panel discussion: ‘Epistemic Powerplay and the Question of Marginalization in (Post)Colonial Africa’, World Congress of Philosophy, Rome, Italy, August 6.

Ipadeola, Abosede (2024). ‘Leadership Ethics: Omoluabi – An African Ethical Response to the Contemporary Leadership Crisis’, African Research Network Online Workshop, April 17.

Ipadeola, Abosede (2024). Book panel: Decolonising Political Concepts, Department of Philosophy, University of Hamburg, Germany, April 23.

Ipadeola, Abosede (2024). Lecture and workshop on ‘Feminist African Philosophy’, Institute for Philosophy, University of Hildesheim, Germany, April 18–19.

Ipadeola, Abosede (2024). ‘Feminist African Philosophy: An African Philosophical Discourse in a Different Voice’, Toulouse Université Jean Jaures, France, January 16.

Ipadeola, Abosede (2024). ‘African Ethics and Leadership’, Faculty of Philosophy and Education, Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, January 12.

Iwuoha, Jude C. (2025). ‘Empowering Women Entrepreneurs through the One Kindred One Business Initiative (OKOBI) Collective Model in South East Nigeria’, *19th Annual International Conference of The Academy of Management Nigeria*, September 24–25.

Morrow, Karen (2024). ‘Law Making and Making Law Work for the Amazon’, panel presentation at ‘Beyond Evidence – How Law Represents Itself’ Panel, Research Committee on the Sociology of Law Conference, September 2024, Bangor. <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/events/representing-law>

Pietruska, Jamie (2025). ‘From Pluvius Policies to Wildfire Markets: A History of Weather Gambling and the Financialization of Catastrophe.’ Paper presented at *Money Talks: Futures for the Economic Humanities*, University of Edinburgh.

Süß, Rahel (2024). ‘Demokratie der Zukunft: Virtuelle Parlamente und KI?’, re:publica, September 21. <https://re-publica.com/de/session/demokratie-der-zukunft-virtuelle-parlamente-und-ki>

Süß, Rahel (2024). ‘Zukunft? Zukünfte! Wie wir das Morgen selbst gestalten’, re:publica, September 21. <https://re-publica.com/de/session/zukunft-zukuenfte-wie-wir-das-morgen-selbst-gestalten>.

Süß, Rahel (2024). ‘Radikale Demokratie für das Klima’, Vortrag, Universität Hamburg, organized by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, June 11.

Süß, Rahel (2024). ‘Die Freiheit des Neuanfangs’, Jugendsymposium “Utopie, produktiv”, Kassel, May 9.

Süß, Rahel (2024). ‘Vertrauen und die Zukunft der Demokratie’, Panel (with Maja Göpel and Felix Heidenreich), Konferenzwoche 2024, Leuphana, March 1.

Vogliano, Chris (2025). ‘The World Food Map: A New Tool for Understanding Biocultural Food Diversity for Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems’, presented at the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) International Congress of Nutrition (ICN), Paris, France, August 2025.

Vogliano, Chris (2025). ‘Unlocking the Nutritional and Safety Potential of North American Seaweed and Bivalves: A Farmer-Led, Multi-Omics Study’, presented at the International Food Data Conference (IFDC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy, September 2025.

Wihl, Tim (2024). Publikumsgespräch with Susanne Heeg, Wem gehört das Land?, Lichthof Theater, February 17. <https://www.lichthof-theater.de/programm/wem-gehoert-das-land-2024-02-10-2024-02-16/2024-02-16/>

EXHIBITIONS

Night at the Museum

Fellows Till Wittwer and Andrew Doss invited fellows and staff to engage with THE NEW INSTITUTE’s building and art collection, through a series of artistic interventions that engaged the space in unexpected and inspiring ways. The Night at the Museum unfolded as a collective guided tour, with many of the artistic contributions reflecting on the entanglement of personal life and socially engaged scholarship, revealing overlooked corners of the Institute’s buildings that nevertheless shape the relationship between the Institute and its community.

Contributors included Andrew Doss, Jessica Duncan, Maximilian Glas, Maria Etemore Glover, Alice Gustson, Maciej Kodzis, Susan Lamb, Mark Morris, Anin Ohm, Jamie Pietruska, and Till Wittwer.





PODCASTS

Belle, Kathryn (2024). 'Feature in The R Spot with Iyanla Vanzant, "Convenience Store Dads"', March. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-r-spot-with-ianla/id1635378512?i=1000649036360>

Breithaupt, Fritz (2025). 'The Rise of YouTube and How It's Changed Our Lives', The Pulse (WHYY/NPR), April 11. <https://whyy.org/episodes/the-rise-of-youtube-and-how-its-changed-our-lives/>

Breithaupt, Fritz (2025). 'Das Muster von Trump: Erzählung und Emotion', conversation with Sven Kochale, MDR Aktuell, June 8. <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/podcast/interview/audio-trump-merz-gespraech-breithaupt-100.html>

Breithaupt, Fritz (2025). 'This Is Your Brain', podcast with Dr. Phil Steig, June. <https://thisisyourbrainwithdrphilstieg.libsyn.com/stories-make-us-human>

Breithaupt, Fritz (2025). 'Wunderbar Together', podcast, May. <https://wunderbartogether.podigee.io/131-fritz-breithaupt>

Cooper, Melinda (2025, forthcoming). 'Interview with Daniel Denvir on Counterrevolution,' The Dig Podcast, October.

Gruber, Stefan, and Bollier, David (2024). 'An Atlas for Urban Commons of the World', Frontiers of Commoning, episode 30, October. <https://david-bollier.simplecast.com/episodes/stefan-grubers-global-portfolio-of-urban-commons>

Salami, Minna (2025). 'Can Feminism Be African?', Intelligence Squared. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3KSlCnFoDPokZOyDdoWMjK?si=icUcal1KTj-wHJ9A5ITqNw>

Salami, Minna (2025). 'Can Feminism Be African?', BBC Sounds. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/pokrljkhk>

FILMS

Over the past years, several of our fellows have collaborated on acclaimed documentary film projects, notably with ARTE. A central highlight is the ongoing series “Unhappy”, which explores nuanced approaches to happiness and well-being through in-depth conversations with thinkers and creatives from various fields.



In previous seasons, our fellows Ruth Chang and Avram Alpert contributed thought-provoking perspectives to episodes examining the philosophy and practicalities of happiness. The current season, available since January 2025 on ARTE Mediathek and YouTube, features fellows Wakanyi Hoffman, Avram Alpert, and Karma Ura in episodes “Vom guten Schlaf” and “Die gute Beziehung.” These installments address themes such as the art of restful sleep and the foundations of healthy relationships, offering viewers accessible guidance for enriching everyday life.



This year’s episodes have further broadened the discussion, with fellow Minna Salami drawing on her influential work *Sensuous Knowledge* to address the importance of sensuality and embodied wisdom in living well, while seeking to redefine our relationship to body and senses in a non-political, advice-oriented format.

Fritz Breithaupt has now joined the series, offering his perspective on topics like aging, self-confidence, memory, family stories, finding happiness in cities, and the deeper layers of empathy and conflict. His insights add thoughtful depth to the conversation, touching on the intricate realities that define our daily lives.

MISCELLANEOUS

Alemdar, Zeynep & Başer, Utku (2025). ‘Almanya seçimleri Türkiye’yi nasıl etkiler?’, Spektrum (Aposto), YouTube, February 26. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWCwoJhgurk>

Breithaupt, Fritz & Schwarz, Marietta (2024). ‘Die USA-Wahl und der Umgang mit den Emotionen’, Fazit (Deutschlandradio Kultur), live US-Election debriefing, November 6. <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/die-usa-wahl-und-der-umgang-mit-den-emotionen-dlf-kultur-gaa6a636-100.html>

Sumfleth, Luca & **Breithaupt, Fritz**, et al. (2024). 'Geschichten erzählen – Wie wir mit Narrativen die Welt erklären', SWR2 Wissen, SWR2, April 18. <https://www.swr.de/swrkultur/wissen/geschichten-erzaehlen-wie-wir-mit-narrativen-die-welt-erklaren-104.html>

Bruhn, Eiken & **Brüggemann, Michael** (2024). "Medien tragen zur Spaltung bei". taz.de. <https://taz.de/Wissenschaftler-ueber-Polarisierung/!6o26340/>

Groff, Maja & UNDP (2025). 'In Conversation with Maja Groff: Can We Revive Aging Global Institutions?', interview by United Nations Development Programme, Istanbul Innovation Days 2025, March 10. <https://istanbulinnovationdays.org/in-conversation-with-maja-groff-can-we-revive-aging-global-institutions/>

Pörksen, Bernhard & Bleisch, Barbara (2025). 'Wir hören, was wir fühlen', Sternstunde Philosophie, SRF Kultur, YouTube, February 9. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuLY_vxQ5i4

Pörksen, Bernhard & Zobl, Susanne (2025). 'Ignoranz ist eine Supermacht: Interview mit Bernhard Pörksen', News.at, July. <https://www.news.at/menschen/bernhard-poerksen-interview>

Pörksen, Bernhard & Schmitz, Tobias (2025). 'Krisen-Kommunikation: Würden Sie Björn Höcke zuhören, Professor Pörksen?', stern, February 3. <https://www.stern.de/gesellschaft/bernhard-poerksen--forscher-kritisiert-habecks-kuechentisch-kampagne-35416350.html>

Pörksen, Bernhard & Hecht, Judith (2025). 'Ich habe nicht intensiv genug zugehört', Die Presse am Sonntag, June 16. <https://www.diepresse.com/19265485/bernhard-poerksen-ich-habe-nicht-intensiv-genug-zugehoert>

Pörksen, Bernhard & Löwisch, Georg (2025). 'Zuhören ist ein Akt der Freiheit', Die ZEIT, 4/2025, January 18. <https://www.zeit.de/2025/04/bernhard-poerksen-ignoranz-zuhoeren-medienwissenschaft>

Pörksen, Bernhard & Slomka, Marietta 2025. 'Neue Definition von Macht', Heute Journal, ZDF, June 17. <https://www.zdf.de/video/magazine/heute-journal-104/sgs-poerksen-slomka-100>



4.

EVENTS

We host various event and discussion formats to share ideas, present work in progress, and test arguments. Whether taking a deep dive into the work of our fellows and programs or providing outside stimuli from invited guests, our conferences, workshops, lectures, and talks intensify the exchange of ideas across programs and disciplines. Weekly lectures feature insights from fellows or guest speakers, fostering ongoing dialogue. Collaborations with Felix Jud Bookstore brought unique public formats: “Shelf Openings,” where fellows highlight influential books, and “Let’s Talk Books!” for open book discussions. During the 2024–2025 academic year, we hosted more than 65 events, including more than 20 public events, enhancing engagement and sharing ideas.



Insight Talks

01.10.24

Conceptualizing Capitalism
Aaron Benanav, Kimberly Chong, and Daniel Halliday



09.10.24

Are Capitalism and Democracy Compatible?
Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou, Martin Mulsow, and Dingxin Zhao (Chinese sociologist and the Max Palevsky Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Chicago, USA)

15.10.24

Global Governance
Zeynep Alemdar, Sayed Azam-Ali, and Maja Groff

22.10.24

Ethical Economy and Capitalism
José Luis Chicoma, Paul Kottman, and Kohei Saito



12.11.24

The International Anti-Corruption Court: A New Instrument to Fight Corruption
Susan Lamb

26.11.24

How Can Communities Shape Sustainable Development? Lessons from Three Continents
Donald Amaeshi, Andrew Doss, and Maria Mideros



28.11.24

International Environmental Governance – What Is it and Why Is it Important
Stephen Hockman (Barrister in Environmental Law, United Kingdom) and other guest speakers from the Planetary Governance program

03.12.24

The New Media Reality, The Power of Disinformation, and the Utopia of an Editorial Society
Bernhard Pörksen

05.12.24

Terror Environment: The Ecocide-Genocide Nexus: From Donbas and Chornobyl Through Bucha to Kakhovka
Svitlana Matviyenko

22.01.25

The Promises and Pitfalls of Synthetic Data in Finance and Beyond
Kristian Bondo Hansen (Associate Professor at the Copenhagen Business School's Department of Management, Society and Communication)

28.01.25

How Can We Do Things with Narratives?
Fritz Breithaupt

04.02.25

Is the Digital Economy Creating a New Monopoly in Capitalism? An African Perspective
Imade Osuoben



11.02.25

Gene, Species, Ecosystem, Land, Ocean, Planet: Biodiversity Governance and the Future of Capitalism
Liz Willetts

12.02.25

The Gamed Economy and its Discontents: Financialization, Gamification and 21st Century Fascism
Max Haiven (writer, teacher, and Canada Research Chair in the Radical Imagination)

18.02.25

The Art of Communication and the Art of Listening in Times of Crises and Catastrophe
Bernhard Pörksen

20.02.25

Growth, Degrowth and Planning in the Age of Ecological Collapse
Matthias Schmelzer

25.02.25

Managing Paradoxes in the Governance of Community-Based Enterprises

Onya Idoko

A woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a white top, stands at a wooden podium in a lecture hall. She is gesturing with both hands while speaking to an audience. A laptop and a microphone are on the podium. The audience is seen from behind in the foreground.

04.03.25

Who Needs Artists Around? An Open-Ended Inquiry

Till Wittwer

11.03.25

More than Research: The Opportunities and Risks of Creative Research Methods

Jessica Duncan

A woman with brown hair, wearing a black blazer, stands next to a wooden podium in a lecture hall. She is gesturing with her right hand while speaking. A laptop and a microphone are on the podium. The audience is seen from behind in the foreground.

13.03.25

The Truth of Price: Finance and the Epistemic Engine of Capitalism

Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou

20.03.25

Researching Finance and Futures

Jamie Pietruska, Giulia Dal Maso, Kimberly Chong

A close-up profile shot of a woman with long dark hair looking upwards. A hand in the foreground is pointing towards the top of the frame, likely indicating a point on a screen or a slide.

25.03.25

The Origins of Truth

Martin Mulsow

27.03.25

Boomerang Kids and the Bank of Mum and Dad: The Problem of Dependent Adult Offspring

Daniel Halliday

13.05.25

Toward a Multi-Dimensional Economy

Aaron Benanav

20.05.25

The Twilight of Bacon’s Age and the Art of Governance
Francisco Sagasti



21.05.25

Where Have All the Futures Gone?
Lunch Talk with Jens Beckert

27.05.25

The Commons: A Model for Understanding Collective Action in Communities for a Post-Capitalist World?
Camille Meyer



03.06.25

Geographies of Understanding Food and Environmental Justice through Music: Refuting Eurocentric Epistemologies Across Time and Space
Kristin Reynolds

05.06.25

Epistemic Imperialism in Health Inequity Research: The Case of the Conceptualization and Application of Ethnoracial Categories in Biomedicine
Joanna Malinowska



19.06.25

The Quinoa Bust: The Making and Unmaking of an Andean Miracle Crop
Emma McDonell



24.06.25

Harnessing Africapitalism for the Advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals: A Critical Analysis of the United Nations Global Compact Principles in Practice
Naomi Nwokolo



Public Inspiration Talks

30.10.24

Earth Citizen Solidarity
Jay Bernstein

In his book *Of Ecocide and Human Rights: A Political Morality for the 21st Century*, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research Jay Bernstein endeavored to articulate a philosophical framework for a new form of life in light of climate change. His presentation also offered an overview of his work.

19.11.24

What (if Anything) is Wrong with Capitalism?
Rahel Jaeggi

The renowned philosopher Rahel Jaeggi, Professor of Practical Philosophy, Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy at the Humboldt University in Berlin, has explored the possible causes of our current crises in numerous books and essays. This evening the focus was on the role of capitalism, offering functional, moral and ethical dimensions of critique of capitalism.

27.02.25

EU Economic Governance: Still Not Fit for Purpose?

Vivien A. Schmidt

With its recent reform of the fiscal rules of the Eurozone’s Stability and Growth Pact, suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic, the EU has gone back to “governing by rules and ruling by numbers.” These fiscal rules, together with the failure to add any significant new EU level fiscal capacity, leave the EU unable to address its many challenges in terms of climate change, social inequality, and security. Not only do such deficit and debt targeting rules spell austerity for many EU member-states, they also stand to aggravate social problems and increase political discontent. Legitimacy, so much in question during the Eurozone crisis, is likely again to be at risk, and to fuel even more populist backlash. So how do we explain why EU economic governance is still not fit for purpose? The talk highlighted “grand theories” of European integration, provided insight into economic governance during the Eurozone and Covid-19, considered the flaws of the current reform, and pointed out potential remedies.

Vivian A. Schmidt is Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration, Professor Emerita at Boston University and Visiting Fellow at the Schuman Center at European University Institute in Italy.

05.03.25

Food as a Commons

José Luis Vivero

Departing from the dominant valuation of food as a commodity that is so pervasive in the industrial food system, Jose Luis Vivero deconstructed the idea of food as a for-profit commodity and framed it as a commons, a public good, and a human right. The rationale is based on (a) its essential nature for every human being, (b) the multidimensionality of food that cannot be fully valued in monetary terms, and (c) the many real-life examples, throughout history and today, that prove that all societies have treated food as a commons and a public good. The absolute commodification of food is therefore a historical anomaly

Jose Luis Vivero is a humanitarian professional serving the World Food Program. As a food systems thinker, committed scholar and anti-hunger activist with 25 years of experience in food and nutrition security policy, the right to food and food sovereignty, he has conducted research on agri-food transitions, narratives and practices to consider “food as a commons and a public good” and not simply a commodity. He is one of the editors of the *Routledge Handbook on Food as a Commons* (2019) and his research focuses on territories of commons in Europe, the monitoring of food system transitions, and resilient food systems in fragile environments.



19.03.25

Can Feminism be African? A Most Paradoxical Question (To Counter Collapse)

Minna Salami

“Prepare for the worst” – this is the message of our times. That we are teetering on the brink of collapse: ecological, economic, political, cultural, spiritual. That confusion and fatigue are pervasive and authoritarianism, populism, and oligarchy make up the new reality. In such times, meaningful social transformation is undeniably more elusive than ever. But is there space for change? Can new political philosophies, new epistemologies, and revitalized imaginaries provide vision? This event presented Minna Salami’s latest book, *Can Feminism Be African? A Most Paradoxical Question*, which explores how African feminism offers a critical and emancipatory language for understanding and reimagining the narratives that define our world.



11.06.25

Re-imagining Collapse through an Anthropologist’s Lens
Gillian Tett

Drawing on her background in anthropology and her journalistic engagement with finance and sustainability, Gillian Tett explored how an anthropologist’s lens can help us re-imagine collapse and rethink the moral narratives shaping today’s economic systems. In an age of systemic transition, she invited us to reflect on the cultural assumptions and dominant logics that underpin financial behavior and how we might begin to imagine and build new models of economic life.

Gillian Tett is Provost of King’s College Cambridge, former Chair of the Financial Times Editorial Board, and co-founder of Moral Money.



12.06.25

Inside the Ideological Brain
Leor Zmigrod

This talk explored the possibility that some individuals are particularly susceptible to extreme worldviews and how features of their brains and everyday thought patterns can propel people towards rigid belief systems. Through research in the new field of “political neuroscience” it has become evident that there are psychological and even neurobiological differences between adherents to different ideologies, and that our brains come to reflect the ideologies we hold in real and striking ways. The stakes of embracing an extreme ideology are much higher than we typically assume: if our brains and bodies echo our ideologies, then extremism is not just a political issue, it is also a profoundly personal and existential problem. It is increasingly urgent to think deeply about the origins of ideological convictions and the consequences of adopting binary worldviews, as well as what it means to think and exist flexibly in a world determined to position us in narrow boxes.

Leor Zmigrod is a political psychologist and neuroscientist investigating whether some brains are susceptible to extreme ideologies and how minds can break free from rigid dogmas.





At the Bar: New Ethics Discussions

This informal discussion space evolved out of organic exchanges between fellows, as conceptions of “New Ethics” are fundamental to various aspects of our programs. At each session, one person brings a perspective, question, or idea as a springboard for that week’s discussion, giving a quick intro to catalyze the informal exchange.

20.11.24

Why Academia is a Critical Resource for Global Governance
Sayed Azam-Ali

27.11.24

Growth or Degrowth
Kohei Saito

04.12.24

Market-based Capitalism as a Moral Project
Kenneth Amaeshi

22.01.25

Are we in a Crisis of Civilization?
Paul Kottman



29.01.25

A Post-Patriarchal Ethics in an Era of Broligarchy
Jessica Duncan

19.02.25

Some Ideas on the Theme “Hard Choices”
Aaron Benanav

26.02.25

Against New Enlightenments: A Case for an Ethics of Democratic Enchantment
Aris Komporozos-Athanasίου

06.03.25

The Rise of Cognitive Distortions
Fritz Breithaupt

12.03.25

**Should we Permit Mass Participation of Victims in International Criminal Trials?
A Case Study of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal**
Susan Lamb



26.03.25

The Politics and Ethics of Looking Ahead
Jamie Pietruska

14.05.25

Demographic Ageing
Daniel Halliday

20.05.25

Old and New Worlds: Thoughts on the Pleasures of (Casual) Anti-Americanism
Paul Kottman

28.05.25

Do We Need an Objective Basis for Morality/Ethics? Does this Objective Basis Exist? Are Current Societies in Need of Such a Basis?
Maja Groff



Other Public Events

NEXUS: Into the Future with a System Reboot?
Is a system overhaul the only way towards a future worth living? Israeli historian and bestselling author Yuval Noah Harari and Japanese philosopher and critic of capitalism Kohei Saito discussed this question at the Frankfurter Buchmesse. The event was part of Frankfurt Buchmesse's cultural-political program "Frankfurt Calling", in cooperation with *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and Goethe University Frankfurt.



19.10.24

Black Feminism in Non-Fiction & Fiction

Former NEW INSTITUTE fellow and political sociologist Akwugo Emejulu and Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Missy Magazine* Dominique Haensell both deal with Black Feminism in their writing, focusing on racial, gender, and class inequalities. At an event at the Frankfurter Buchmesse, they had a conversation about topics that affect women of color, from intersectionality and post-colonialism to activism for justice. The discussion was moderated by writer Lubi Barre and explored ideas around the power of the written word, such as what significance novels have for their theoretical work, which books have particularly inspired their feminist thinking, and what kind of literature really brings about social change.



29.10.24

The Second Shelf: Feminism & Knowing

This joint event at Felix Jud Bookstore brought together NEW INSTITUTE advisory fellow and feminist author Minna Salami and philosopher Jonna Bornemark (Associate Professor of Philosophy, Södertörn University, Sweden) for an intimate conversation on the books that have shaped their understanding of knowledge beyond Eurocentric, patriarchal, technobureaucratic, and rationalist thinking. Through a feminist lens, they explored how an alternative genealogy of knowing, that includes embodied, intuitive, and pluralist knowledge, transforms our perspectives on the world.

27.11.24

Zeitdiagnostik ohne Zentralschlüssel: Das Glossar der Gegenwart 2.0

Editors Ulrich Bröckling and Susanne Krasmann engaged in a lively discussion with Frank Adloff, Urs Stäheli, Fritz Breithaupt, and Christine Hentschel about what it means today to read our present and to “get to the bottom of it”. The event was organized in cooperation with the University of Hamburg.

03.12.24

Book Launch: Seeds for Democratic Futures

The second volume in our book series *The New* offers thought-provoking and policy-relevant approaches to democratizing contemporary states and societies. From the theoretical to the hands-on, from law to social movements, digitization to ecology, the contributors to this volume—all former fellows from THE NEW INSTITUTE—cover a range of areas to inspire readers to renew democracy. The public book launch brought together three of the authors—Max Krahé (University of Duisburg-Essen), Michael Brüggemann, and Judith Simon (both from University of Hamburg)—for a conversation with the editors of this volume, former fellow Frederic Hanusch (Justus Liebig University Giessen) and Academic Director Anna Katsman, about the potential of democracy.



05.12.24

Book Presentation: The Ninth Revolution: Transforming Food Systems for Good

Sayed Azam-Ali’s path-breaking book argues we need a revolution in our food systems. Market mechanisms are not enough to match the demands placed on our food systems from the converging climate and biodiversity crises or to tackle widespread malnutrition and obesity. The book proposes collective actions on how we can all contribute to transforming the food system for the good of humanity and the planet.

20.01.25

Blue Skies? System Crash Instead of Apocalypse

Conversation at Thalia Theatre's Nachtasyl with fellow Kohei Saito, Joachim Lux (Thalia Theatre Artistic Director), and dramaturge Christina Bellinghen.

Sustainable consumption and green growth—can such measures stop climate change? Kohei Saito says they can't. In his book *Capital in the Anthropocene*, he demonstrates how the foundations of capitalism inhabit the basic logics of an exploitation of humanity and nature. He argues for systemic change founded in democratically managed common goods. Combining his ideas with readings of Karl Marx, he arrives at the concept of degrowth—a way of living that dismisses the centrality of production and consumption. These are questions that are also discussed on theatre stages, and Joachim Lux and Christina Bellinghen engaged with Saito on his utopian theory in the context of Thalia Theater's production of American author T.C. Boyle's dystopian *Blue Skies*.



21–22.03.25

Remarks on Post-truth Capitalism at The PolyOpportunity

Fellow Aris Komporozos-Athanasίου opened the Berlin Salon of The PolyOpportunity with remarks on the theme of post-truth capitalism, framing the conversations around crisis and poly-opportunity. The PolyOpportunity is a global initiative by the House of Beautiful Business, aiming to craft a new narrative in response to the current polycrisis by fostering a life-centered economy.

21.05.25

Plan B for the Climate? Public Event in Cooperation with KörperForum

Climate neutrality remains the goal in the fight against climate change. But the necessary steps are repeatedly being slowed down worldwide. Journalist Stephanie Rohde talked to sociologist Jens Beckert and economist Susanne Dröge from the Federal Environment Agency about realism in climate policy and the question “what is Plan B for the climate?”

22.05.25

Helmut-Schmidt-Zukunftspreis: Award Ceremony at Thalia Theater

THE NEW INSTITUTE, in collaboration with the Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt Foundation and DIE ZEIT, awarded the annual Helmut Schmidt Future Prize at the Thalia Theater. For the first time, two individuals were jointly awarded: German choreographer and director Sasha Waltz, and Danish artist and architect Ólafur Elíasson. Their cultural contributions were recognized for advancing democracy, environmental protection, and liberal values, following past laureates Vanessa Nakate, Sanna Marin, and Meredith Whittaker. This year's jury included chairman Uwe Jean Heuser (DIE ZEIT), Alexander Birken (Otto Group), Antje Boetius (Alfred-Wegener-Institut), Francesca Bria (Italian National Innovation Fund), Sanna Marin, Vanessa Nakate, Anna Katsman (THE NEW INSTITUTE), Meredith Whittaker (Signal), and Meik Woyke (Helmut Schmidt Foundation).

The jury described Sasha Waltz weaving “social issues into her art in a very human way. From ‘Allee der Kosmonauten,’ where she explored life in a high-rise neighborhood, to the ‘Dialogues’ series, and more recently in ‘In C,’ she responds to the attacks on democracy by focusing on empathy and human connection.”

Regarding Ólafur Elíasson, the jury said: “Ólafur Elíasson’s works remind people all over the world of their responsibility for the environment, while creating shared experiences through art in a way that’s almost unique. He counters the trend of focusing on the national or the individual with a vision of a society that cares and engages in dialogue, even challenging boundaries within the commercial space. You can see this in his projects like the giant sun in the Tate Modern in London in 2003 and 2004, where he brought two million people together.”



17.06.25

Book talk: Bodenschätze

This book talk was held at Felix Jud Bookstore with the author Isabel Feichtner as well as Tim Wihl (University of Erfurt) and Maximilian Petras (Helmuth Schmidt University Hamburg). In her new book, Feichtner sheds light on the question of who owns the soil, whether it's in a city on land or in the sea: "For decades, urban soil has been privatized, and the ocean floor is also being exploited. Companies want to mine minerals in the deep sea that are needed for the batteries of electric cars. Residential real estate and deep-sea minerals have become investment properties, and the exploitation of the soil has far-reaching social implications. Even if the two places are very far apart, the processes of their exploitation and valuation allow us to negotiate fundamental questions of our present. And resistance is growing....coalitions are forming against deep seabed mining. Counter-rights are being mobilized against the exploitation of soil, and it is becoming clear how habitability could become the focus of a planetary policy."

18.06.25

On Breathing and Collapse: Book Discussion with Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou and Jamieson Webster

This discussion between sociologist Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou and psychoanalyst Jamieson Webster was about Webster's new book *On Breathing*, a searching and poetic reflection on the psychic, political, and bodily dimensions of breath. It draws on philosophy, psychoanalysis, and personal experience to explore what it means to breathe in a world that so often constricts us.

As part of their collaboration on the *Futures of Capitalism* program, Komporozos-Athanasiou and Webster also reflected on what it means to "put capitalism on the couch"—probing collective denial, shared vulnerabilities, and the psychic contours of planetary collapse. Did psychoanalysis sense the breakdown before the markets did? Was the real myth not collapse, but the sense of coherence we imagined had come before it?



5.

COOPERATIONS
& PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the 2024–2025 academic year, we continued to foster collaborations and cultivate long-term partnerships with actors from academia, civil society, politics, and business. Below is a selection of institutions we have worked with.

Centers

Erck Rickmers’ commitment to fostering academic and societal change began well before the founding of THE NEW INSTITUTE in Hamburg. He supported the creation of several university research centers dedicated to exploring the nexus between scholarly work and social transformation.

THE NEW INSTITUTE’s Centre for Social Critique at Humboldt University Berlin, Germany (until 2028)

The Berlin Centre builds on the tradition of critical theory and is led by political philosopher Rahel Jaeggi. Its focus lies on examining the past and present pathologies of capitalism in order to explore how social change can be effectively pursued in an era of growing inequality.

THE NEW INSTITUTE’s Centre for Environmental Humanities at Ca’Foscari University Venice, Italy (until March 2025)

The Venice Centre focuses on the environmental humanities, with its research deeply rooted in the unique history and ecological challenges of Venice. Under the leadership of Francesca Tarocco, a scholar specializing in the intersection of Buddhist and Asian Studies, the program engages with these themes to address the city’s environmental issues.

Yehudit and Yehuda Elkana Fellowship

Established in collaboration with the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, the Yehudit and Yehuda Elkana Fellowship offers researchers committed to the free exchange of knowledge and the promotion of academic debate the opportunity to spend three to six months at either THE NEW INSTITUTE in Hamburg or the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

Helmut-Schmidt-Zukunftspreis (Helmut Schmidt Future Prize)

In 2025, THE NEW INSTITUTE, in collaboration with the Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt Foundation and DIE ZEIT, continued presenting the Helmut Schmidt Future Prize, an annual award recognizing innovative achievements in the fields of democracy, society, and technology. Following in the footsteps

of Ugandan activist and social entrepreneur Vanessa Nakate, Finnish politician Sanna Marin, and technology advocate Meredith Whittaker, this year marked the first time that two individuals were honored with the Helmut Schmidt Future Prize: German choreographer, dancer, and director Sasha Waltz, and Danish visual artist, designer, and public space architect Ólafur Eliasson. They were recognized for their cultural innovations that promoted the protection of democracy and nature, as well as for their commitment to a liberal society.

In 2025, the jury of the Helmut Schmidt Future Prize consisted of: Jury chairman Uwe Jean Heuser (DIE ZEIT), Alexander Birken (CEO of Otto Group), Antje Boetius (Director of the Alfred-Wegener-Institut at the Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research), Francesca Bria (President of the Italian National Innovation Fund), Sanna Marin (Former Prime Minister of Finland, advisor for the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change), Vanessa Nakate (climate activist and social entrepreneur), Anna Katsman (Academic Director of THE NEW INSTITUTE), Meredith Whittaker (President of Signal), and Meik Woyke (Chairman and CEO of the Bundeskanzler-Helmut-Schmidt-Stiftung).



Hamburg Sustainability Conference

In the 2024–2025 academic year, THE NEW INSTITUTE partnered with the inaugural Hamburg Sustainability Conference—an international forum convening leaders from politics, business, science, and civil society to shape the global sustainability agenda. Opened by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the conference was co-hosted by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the UN Development Programme, the Michael Otto Foundation, and the City of Hamburg.

In addition to several fellows participating in the main program, THE NEW INSTITUTE curated a dedicated event in 2024 titled “How to Make Food Systems Better for People and Planet.” The session gathered voices from science, policy, and activism to address the urgent need for more sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems.



In 2025, THE NEW INSTITUTE hosted a public panel, “Governance Innovations to Address Earth System Risks,” featuring leading scientists and policymakers on Earth system risks and planetary boundaries. In collaboration with TMG Research, it also organized “Working with Informality: Food, Livelihoods, and the Path to Resilient Communities,” exploring informal economies—from school feeding to food vending and community-based aid.

Through its involvement, THE NEW INSTITUTE reaffirmed its commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue and practical action at the intersection of ecological transformation, social justice, and global governance.

Integrity Initiatives International

Since 2023, THE NEW INSTITUTE has partnered with Integrity Initiatives International, a non-governmental organization dedicated to fighting grand corruption and advancing the creation of an International Anti-Corruption Court to tackle global economic crime. THE NEW INSTITUTE is proud to support the efforts to draft a model treaty for the future International Anti-Corruption Court by hosting its biannual treaty committee meetings. International jurists, lawyers, scholars, and anti-corruption experts from across the globe convene at THE NEW INSTITUTE to form the draft model treaty as a foundation for public discussions among governments, civil society, and the private sector on how to establish an effective International Anti-Corruption Court.



Felix Jud Bookstore

The Felix Jud Bookstore in THE NEW INSTITUTE is an international, multi-perspective, transdisciplinary bookstore with a focus on questions of ecology, new forms of economy, democratic innovation and concepts for a better world.

Since moving into our institute building in 2022, we have been cooperating with the Hamburg bookstore Felix Jud, which operates the Felix Jud Bookstore in the Warburg Ensemble. In close collaboration with our library, the bookstore's stock is intended to provide insight into the themes of the Institute's programs. Above all, however, the bookstore hosts public, low-key events in which the fellows' brief contributions are merely an invitation to a conversation in a relaxed atmosphere. Experimenting with new formats all the time, in 2024, we introduced our latest feature, a monthly Reading Club, which proved immensely popular with fellows and external guests. As a little twist and challenge for ourselves, we read through various literary genres over a six-month period.



Photo by Sabine Vielmo



6.

MEDIA

For four years, the Media team has been THE NEW INSTITUTE’s storytellers—not just sharing ideas but building a bridge between our fellows’ work and the world. We focused on narratives of change, not just theories of change. This meant crafting stories that were critical yet constructive, personal yet universal, and always rooted in the belief that ideas thrive when they connect.

We brought our fellows’ work to life by producing high-quality texts, audio, video, and photographs. Each format was crafted to engage readers and viewers and encourage new perspectives. Art wasn’t an accessory; it was our language. It turned research into visceral experiences and created spaces (both physical and digital) where ideas could collide and evolve.

Our website became a living hub, a place where academic work was translated into accessible dialogue through essays, reports, and editorials. It was more than a platform; it was a promise. Even as the Institute transitions, the website remains: a record of our journey, a resource for tomorrow’s thinkers, and proof that conversations about societal transformation will continue to ripple outwards.



Newsletters

Through *The Update*, we offered monthly snapshots of the Institute's pulse—event highlights, fellow spotlights, sources of inspiration, and curated reading lists—while documenting how our fellows' projects took shape throughout the year. As our international fellow community grew, so did our readership, reaching over 10,500 subscribers.

In the *Re-thinking Capitalism* newsletter series, our media fellow Felix Rohrbeck brought our research to life, cutting through academic jargon to ask, “What’s broken? What’s being tested? What could change?” Each edition offered a glimpse into the journeys of our fellows as they challenged the status quo. Examples include José Luis Chicoma, who transformed his experience as Peru’s Minister of Production into a blueprint for food justice; Kohei Saito, who reimagined economic planning for a post-growth world; and Maja Groff, who campaigned for an International Environmental Court with real power. These stories grounded big ideas in lived experience, offering not just critique but also a roadmap for change. The full series is archived on our website.



THE NEW

In November 2024 we published *Seeds for Democratic Futures*, the second volume in our book series THE NEW. The 17 essays in *Seeds* were written by former fellows at THE NEW INSTITUTE and represent a bold call to rethink what democracy can and should be. Covering topics from law and social movements to digitization, ecology, climate change, and artificial intelligence, the contributors offer both theoretical insights and hands-on ideas. Each essay plants a seed with the hope of renewing and strengthening democracy or sparking new democratic possibilities. But the book doesn't merely ask how to fix democracy, it asks what it takes to grow something better. *Seeds for Democratic Futures* encourages creative, compassionate, and unconventional approaches, inviting readers to imagine and build democratic futures that are as diverse, resilient, and vibrant as the people they are meant to serve.

A German edition of *Seeds for Democratic Futures* is forthcoming, as is the third volume of the series THE NEW, which will address the 2024–2025 annual theme of Re-thinking Capitalism. The goal of the series is to make humanistic research relevant and accessible to wider audiences, and all of our publications are available as Open Access publications via transcript Verlag.



Film

At THE NEW INSTITUTE, filmmaking is woven into our mission to amplify dialogue and drive transformation. For us, the moving image is not just a tool for documentation; it is a means of reflection, questioning and reimagining our shared realities. We conceive each film project as an invitation to explore the intersection between research and lived experience, to shed light on the choices that define our era and to initiate the conversations that are essential for meaningful change.

Our productions go beyond recording events; they actively reveal the connections between the work of our fellows and the urgent issues shaping society today. Through them, complex ideas circulate—dynamic and alive—encouraging viewers to reconsider prevailing narratives and to envision new possibilities. We see every film as an opportunity to expand the boundaries of what is possible, inspiring thoughtful engagement and collective action within and beyond our community.



One Idea 60 Seconds

Each idea is its own act of resistance against the tyranny of complexity. In sixty seconds, our fellows—economists, philosophers, biologists—distill the essence of their research into a statement, a provocation, a window into another way of seeing. From Onya Idoko’s meditation on balancing priorities in collective business enterprises to Fritz Breithaupt’s exploration of why stories matter, these shorts are proof: transformation can begin with a sentence, a gesture, a look into the lens. Shared across social media channels, the series became a living archive of the myriad energies animating the institute over the past year. Here, brevity is not limitation but liberation—a form of radical clarity.

ONE IDEA 60 SECONDS



Can Feminism be African?
Program Chair Minna Salami on the question: Can feminism be African?



What comes after the end of progress?
Program Chair Kohei Saito on the end of progress.



How does finance shape our world today?
Program Chair Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou on uncovering finance’s hidden impact.



Are “efficient” house hold appliances really saving labor?
Fellow Kirstin Munro on the myth that technologies like washing machines and vacuums reduced domestic work.



How can CBEs balance their competing priorities and thrive?
Fellow Onya Idoko on CBEs.



What is the essence of storytelling?
Senior fellow Fritz Breithaupt on storytelling.



What can be done to reform food systems?
Fellow Jessica Duncan on reforming food



Can aquatic foods lead the way to sustainable nutrition?
Fellow Nicolás Rovegno Arrese on aquatic



How can we transform our food system for a better future?
Fellow María Fernanda Mideros Bastidas on

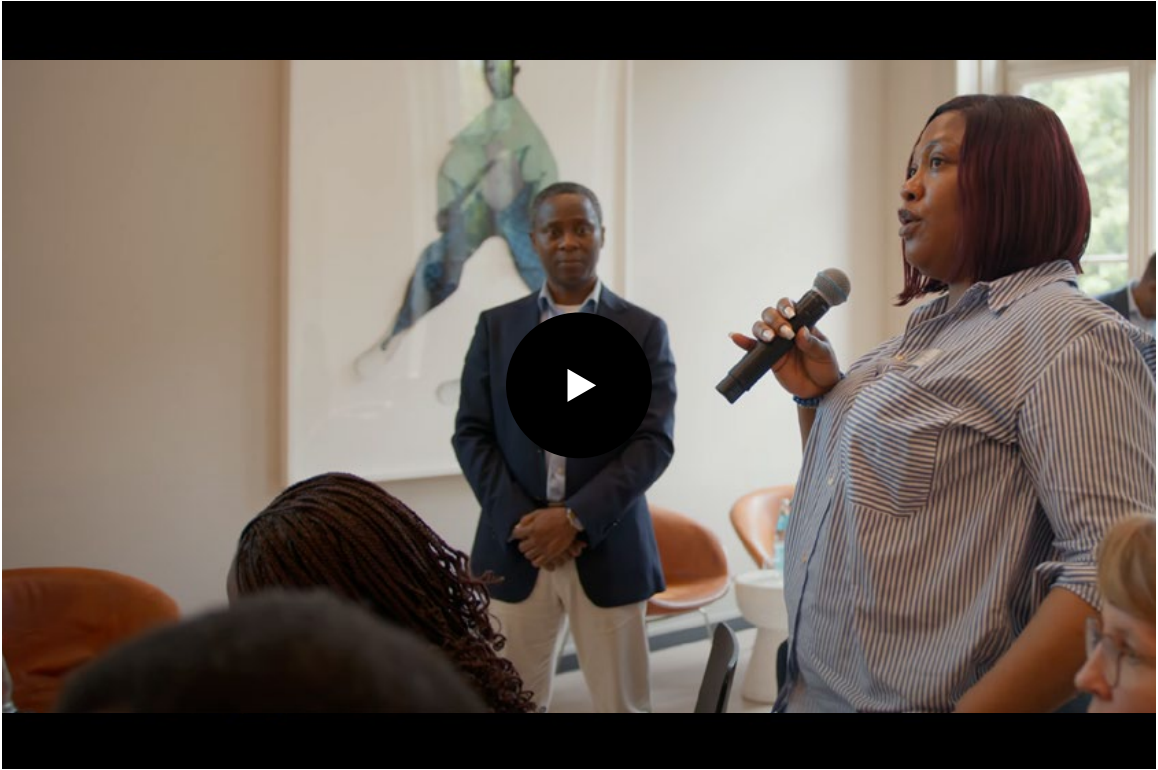
Interviews

We seek out conversations that are alive with tension and hope, and dialogues that refuse easy closure. Zeynep Alemdar brings together thinkers for urgent discussions on academic freedom, while Jay Bernstein talks to our Academic Director, Anna Katsman, about climate catastrophe and emerging forms of solidarity. These recordings are interventions designed to travel beyond the walls of the Institute and stimulate thought wherever they are heard.



Project Films

At the intersection of story and action stand our project films. At the Africapitalism Conference, the future felt tangible for a moment: shared entrepreneurship, the OKOBI model, the determination of communities in Nigeria, Kenya, and beyond to redefine the continent’s destiny. The camera acts as both witness and companion, neither glossing over contradictions nor simplifying complexity, but rather tracing its arc—from roundtable debates to lived realities. The film documents not consensus, but the possibility of movement. What would it take to build an economy grounded in dignity and trust rather than extraction and dependency?



In our film on the Future of Food Advisory Committee Meeting, the stakes are ecological collapse, global malnutrition, entrenched inequity. The medium captures not only the gravity of the challenge but also the optimism and urgency of the experts gathered in Hamburg, who imagine food systems where sustainability, health, and justice are inseparable.



These films, like all our media, are invitations. To slow down, look closely, and become unsettled—in the best way. We believe in conversation as the engine of change.

7.

LIBRARY

The library aims to facilitate knowledge creation within the Institute. Consequently, we see ourselves primarily as a service facility that provides any type of requested information straight away and also handles research requests on specific topics or compiles bibliographies. At the same time, the library is also a physical space housing a collection of analogue books, creating the “full library atmosphere”. This curated and customized selection of print (but also digital) resources reflects the current work at the Institute—hence the strong accent on the humanities and social sciences.

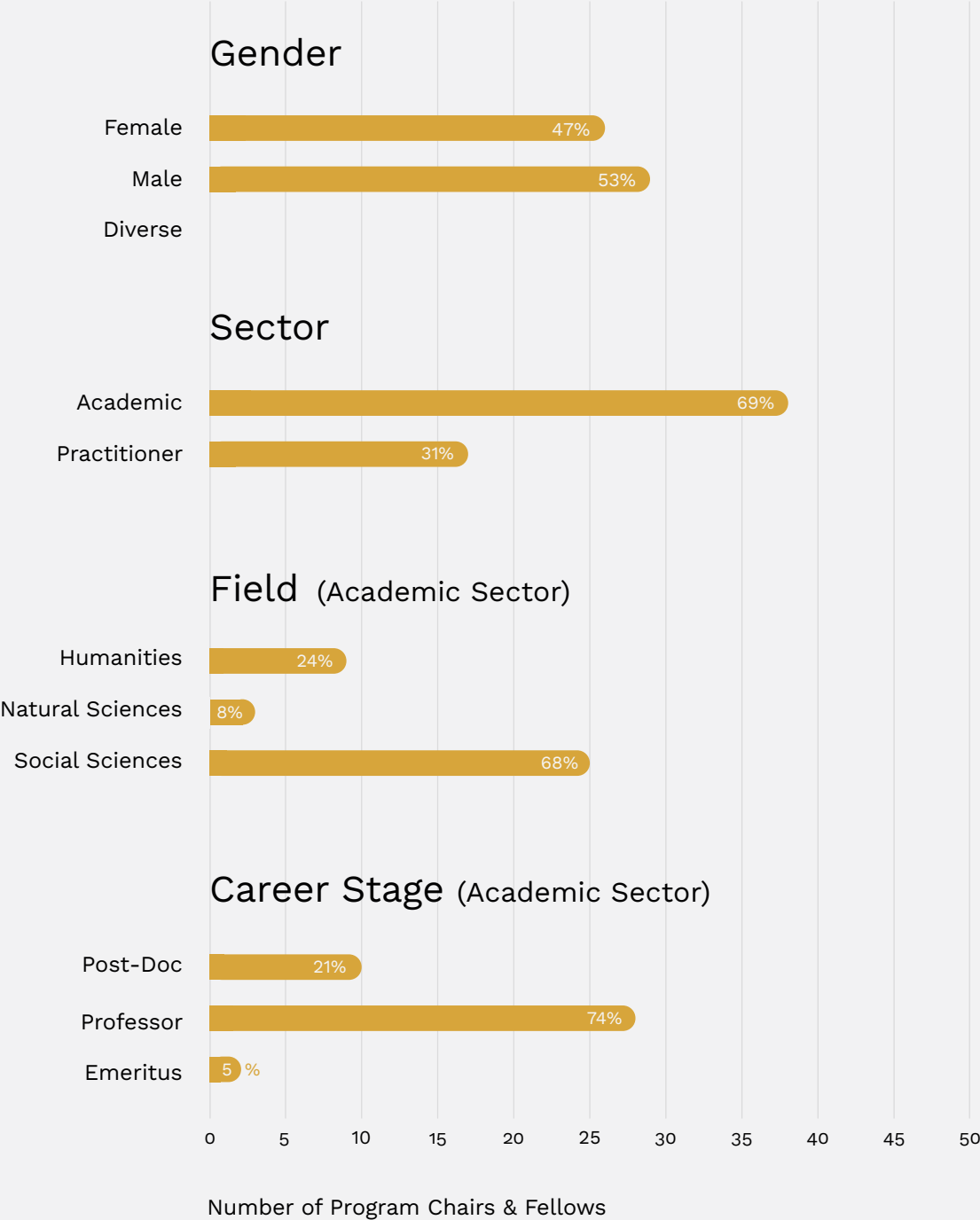
Yet, our overarching focus, which also integrates selected titles from the natural sciences on the one hand and works of fiction and art on the other, is designed so to inspire fellows to look beyond the focus of their own research. And, most important, although our ambition is to ensure that timely and relevant titles are already in stock before they are requested, we consider our library a joint endeavor that grows and develops together and in close dialogue with the community. Our collection is constantly growing and comprised almost 3,000 physical books by June 2025.

As a public event, our library team established a monthly Reading Club at Felix Jud Bookstore with alternating genres, reading novels as well as short stories and poetry. Titles discussed were *Concerning the Future* of Souls by Joy Williams, *Clear* by Carys Davies, *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, *Revolutionary Petunias* by Alice Walker, *The Empusium* by Olga Tokarczuk, and *I Who Have Never Known Men* by Jacqueline Harpman.



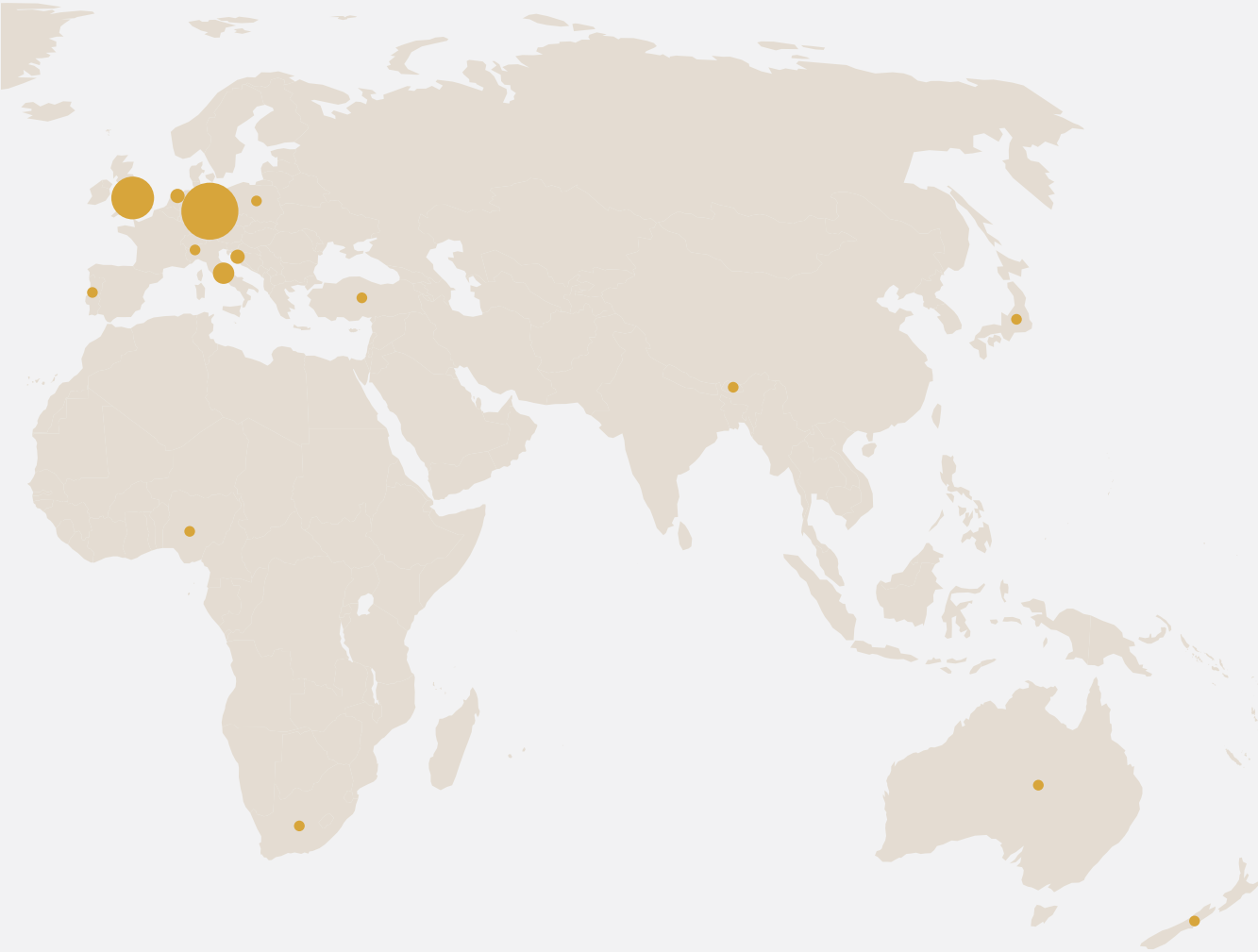
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FELLOW
STATISTICS

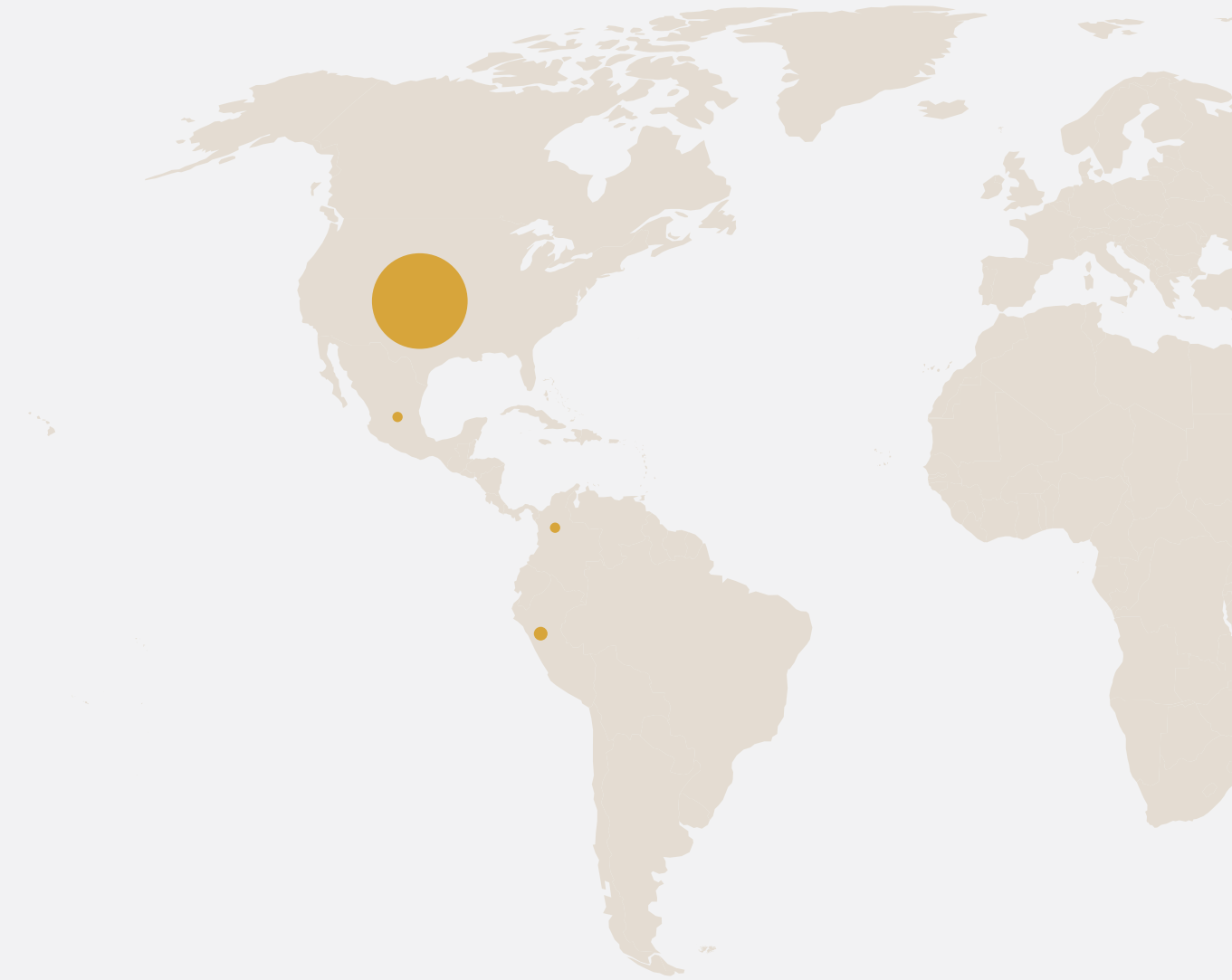


Country and Continent of Residence*

Africa	South Africa	1	
	Nigeria	6	
	Total	7	13%
Asia	Turkey	1	
	Japan	1	
	China	1	
	Total	3	5%
Europe	Germany	8	
	UK	6	
	Italy	3	
	Netherlands	2	
	Croatia	2	
	Switzerland	1	
	Poland	1	
	Portugal	1	
	Total	24	44%
Australia	Australia	2	
	Total	2	4%



*Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding differences.



Country and Continent of Residence

Latin America	Peru	2	
	Mexico	1	
	Colombia	1	
	Total	4	7%

North America	USA	14	
	Canada	1	
	Total	15	27%



Group photo of the 24-25 fellow cohort.



Group photo of the facilitating team.

THE NEW INSTITUTE

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